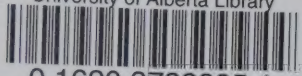
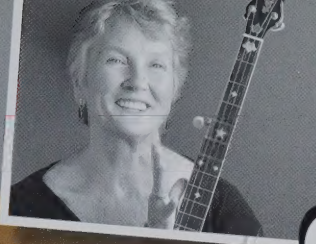


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**Peggy Seeger**

"My mother didn't take to Woody Guthrie at all—he was a bit too rough."



**Reviews**

**Bob Dylan**

"Changing the face of modern folk music."

# penguin eggs

**anne briggs  
ben caplan  
lori yates**

**kacy & clayton**

**maja & david  
the small glories  
cactus blossoms**

**exclusive excerpt**

MUSIC

**live: travels with my brother**

**choir by garnet rogers**

Issue No. 69 Spring 2016 \$5.99



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MATT ANDERSEN HONEST MAN



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3/19.....Philadelphia, PA	4/14.....Saint John, NB	5/4.....Salina, KS	5/13.....Los Angeles, CA

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[www.truenorthrecords.com](http://www.truenorthrecords.com)



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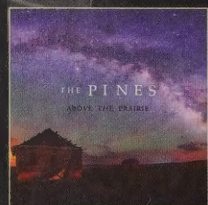


THE CACTUS BLOSSOMS YOU'RE DREAMING



### THE CACTUS BLOSSOMS **YOU'RE DREAMING**

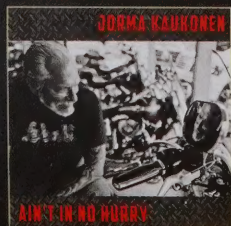
The national debut from one of the most highly acclaimed duos in Americana music today. Produced by **JD McPherson**, *You're Dreaming* showcases their seamless harmonies and blend of early rock 'n' roll and classic country with a modern sound all their own.



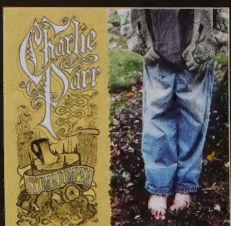
### THE PINES **ABOVE THE PRAIRIE**

The indie-folk rockers return with their long-awaited new record whose poetic themes and hypnotic sounds mystically rise up from the heartland. Features the evocative "Aerial Ocean" and a haunting collaboration with Native American artist/poet/activist **John Trudell**.

### MORE GREAT TITLES FROM RED HOUSE RECORDS



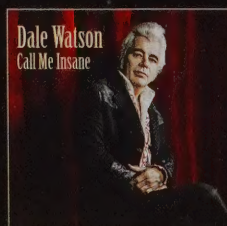
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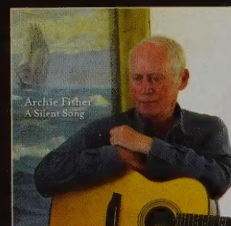
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Archie Fisher  
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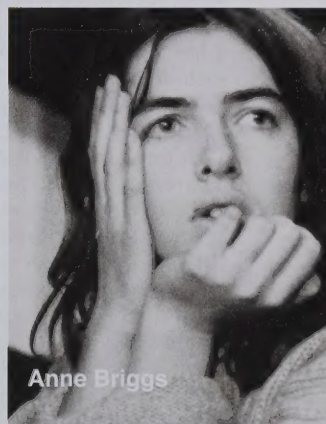
Maja & David



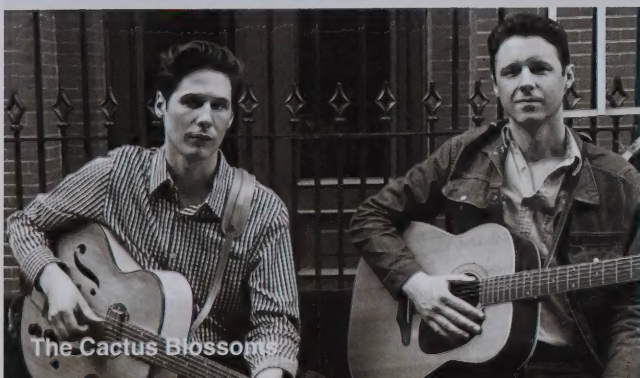
Peggy Seeger



The Small Glories



Anne Briggs



The Cactus Blossoms

Photo: By Ian Biggar. Courtesy of The Southside Folk Club.



Garnet and Stan Rogers



# penguin eggs

The Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such diverse artists as Bob Dylan, Warren Zevon and Kate Rusby.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. In 2012, however, he finally made an emotional comeback, performing at several events throughout the summer. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. It's available through Topic Records. This magazine strives to reiterate its spirit.

*Penguin Eggs* magazine is published and printed in Canada and acknowledges the generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through Canada Heritage and the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) distributed through the Canada Council for the Arts.

Canada



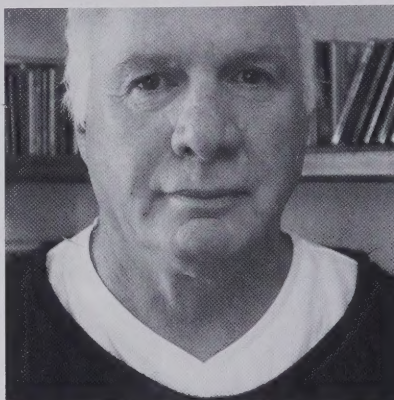
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# Editorial



Live Nation, 'the largest concert promoter in the world,' as it bills itself, just got bigger. In early February, it bought out Union Events—the third largest promoter in Canada. Live Nation promotes at least 90 per cent of all major concerts—seating in excess of 2,500—in the country and an estimated 60 per cent of all concerts in general. And their grip on the market tightened even further as they struck a deal, Feb. 23, to become the preferred promoter for two massive national arenas: Rogers Place in Edmonton and the Winter Garden in Toronto.

What makes this ever-increasing domination of the Canadian concert market even more troubling is Live Nation and Ticketmaster are owned by the same company. And Ticketmaster now sells tickets for the vast majority of live music venues in Canada.

True, they do offer a convenient service. But, as *Forbes* magazine recently reported, Ticketmaster's service fees range from between 15 and 50 per cent on top of the price of standard admission. For that added cost, you log on to their website and reserve and print tickets for events anywhere in North America. Or, with the help of an assistant, you can repeat the same process at a local box office. No problem. But while their financial output is essentially minimal,

they can charge whatever they can get away with.

I recently purchased a ticket to see Peter Gabriel and Sting at Rexall Place in Edmonton, AB, in July through Ticketmaster. For this Live Nation event, my ticket cost \$85. The service charge was \$17, for a total of \$102. That amounts to a 20-per-cent increase. Gabriel and Sting will play to about 15,000—depending on the seating configuration—in Edmonton. So let's say for argument's sake that my ticket is the average price (a very conservative estimate), Ticketmaster will pocket about \$255,000 in service fees for that one show. Peter Gabriel and Sting's tour includes six dates in Canada. You do the math.

*Rolling Stone* magazine reported in December that Ticketmaster sold \$23 billion worth of tickets in 2014. And some of that revenue came from our folk festivals and the off-season concerts they initiate. I have no doubt the added income generated by Ticketmaster makes Live Nation much more competitive when negotiating fees and booking potential tours. How do the Edmonton, Winnipeg, or Calgary folk music festivals compete with that kind of financial might when trying to book headline acts? Obviously, they can't. There's also the matter of exclusivity that Live Nation could, and has, insisted upon. If they book an artist for their massive summer bash in Squamish, BC, what chance does the Vancouver folk festival, 60 kilometres away, have of presenting that performer on the very same weekend? Slim and none.

The late American gonzo journalist and caustic wit Hunter S. Thompson once wrote: 'The music business is a cruel and shallow money trench, a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free, and good men die like dogs. There's also a negative side.'

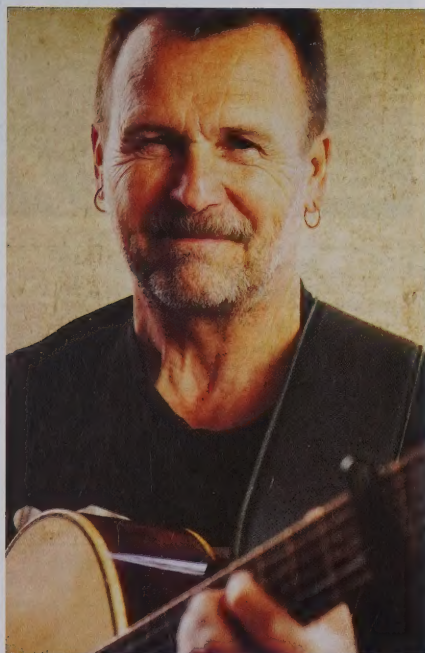
Just so.

— Roddy Campbell



# The Record That Changed My Life

## Martin Simpson



**Renowned English acoustic guitarist, Martin Simpson, celebrates the mind-boggling talents of the masters of The Country Blues.**

When I was 14 years old I was fortunate enough to be a member of a jugband that rejoiced in the name of The Clegg Hall Boggarts (from a book of North Lincolnshire ghost stories). The other members of the band were six or seven years older than me with money to buy records and from one of them, David (Sweeney) Todd, I borrowed Sam Charters's *The Country Blues*, RBF 1, issued in 1959. I borrowed it in 1967 and 49 years later, I still have it...David has bought another.

The album was shocking to me and after all this time remains a total inspiration. It was, I believe, the first of its kind, a collection of classic rural blues from the 1920s and '30s, 78s reissued as a massive slab of vinyl. Blind Willie Johnson growling and playing inconceivably fluid gospel slide guitar, in thrall to his God.

Blind Willie McTell and his 12-string guitar with the extraordinarily vivid *Statesboro' Blues* and Robert Johnson's almost hysterical *Preaching Blues* were each enough on their own, musically, to change me forever, but that was just the start.

The storytelling and the language of the

songs amazed me. Sleepy John Estes's *Special Agent* was obviously so real. The last verse pleads with the railroad officer...

*"Special Agent, Special Agent / Put me off close to some town / I got to do some recording / And I ought to be recording right now."*

I was drawn into the life of this itinerant, visually impaired musician who was forced to ride the freight trains to make a living. I was charmed and moved by his keening voice and the drive of his guitar and accompanists.

Tommy McLennan bragged in his song *I'm a Guitar King*, Big Bill Broonzy's *Key To The Highway* was cool, plaintive, powerful, and like much of this music, just felt downright sexy... Even the two jugbands were sexy, *Stealin'*, *Stealin'* by The Memphis Jug Band was succinct and funny...

*"If you don't believe I love you / Look what a fool I bin / If you don't believe I'm sinking / Look what a hole I'm in."*

Lonnie Johnson's, *Careless Love* is accompanied by celestial 12-string guitar, jazz-tinged and beautiful, but the song ends in a shocking threat of violence which is wholly believable. Blind Willie McTell's 12-string guitar is a revelation—rocking, pounding bass runs, intricate treble fills, and

variation after variation. If only 78s were longer than three minutes.

*Walk Right In* by Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers, is a dancing joy—exquisite harmonica, super syncopated banjo, great vocal harmonies, and mad, jug-blowing adding up to small group early jazz.

The possibilities of guitar playing implicit in this record were so mind-boggling. I'm listening again to Blind Willie Johnson's, *You're Gonna Need Somebody On Your Bond* and it amazes me even more now with the passing years. The rhythmic push is rock solid, the unsurpassed, microtonal, multiple-register slide lines and the impassioned vocals are transcendental.

Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell's piano and guitar are languid and aching. Bukka White's *Fixin' To Die*, with its washboard and slide guitar, is essentially mesmerizing repetition and drive, interspersed with yet more of that magic ingredient, the bottle-neck.

All in all, the record opened the door to a world beyond my imagination and introduced me to a wealth of characters, imagery, and astonishing music from which, I am happy to say, I have never recovered.

*"Good morning Blues, give me your right hand."*





# NIGHT DRIVE

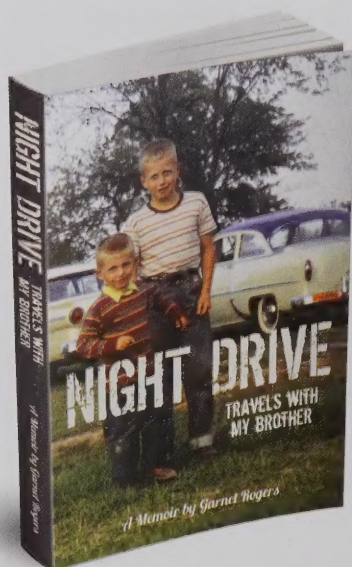
TRAVELS WITH MY BROTHER

*A Memoir by Garnet Rogers*

The long promised book about my life with Stan is done.

Stories about how we grew up together, discovered music together and learned to play in a band together. How the songs got written and recorded. What life on the road was like back before there was an independent music scene. And nearly every stupid and inexplicable and bizarre thing that could happen to a couple of young idiots who were naive enough to think they could play folk music for a living back in the mid 70's.

The bad gigs, the bar fights, the bike gangs, the police chases and the arrests. It's all there. At least most of it.



Available this Spring.

Audiobook version to follow.

[garnetrogers.com](http://garnetrogers.com)

## stingray radio

1. **Old Man Luedecke**  
Domestic Eccentric (True North)
2. **Shawn Colvin**  
Uncovered (Fantasy/Concord)
3. **Watkins Family Hour**  
Watkins Family Hour (Thirty Tigers)
4. **Slocan Ramblers**  
Coffee Creek (Independent)
5. **Ryan Boldt**  
Broadside Ballads (Big White Cloud)
6. **Dave Gunning**  
Lift (Maple Music/Fontana)
7. **Linda McRae**  
Shadow Trails (Borealis)
8. **The Small Glories**  
The Small Glories (Independent)
9. **Norma MacDonald**  
Burn The Tapes (Independent)
10. **Ken Whiteley And The Beulah Band**  
Ken Whiteley And The Beulah Band (Borealis)

The most-played folk and roots discs played nationally by Stingray Music throughout November, December and January, 2015-16.

## fred's records

1. **Fortunate Ones**  
The Bliss (Old Farm Pony)
2. **Ron Hynes**  
Later That Same Life (Independent)
3. **Matthew Byrne**  
Sing Through the Earth & Skies (Independent)
4. **Ron Hynes**  
Face to the Gale (EMI)
5. **Ron Hynes**  
Cryer's Paradise (EMI)

Based on album sales for November, December and January 2015-16 at Freds Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, 1C 1G5



Rhianna Giddens

## pascal gemme's all-time top 10



Pascal Gemme

**Jean-François Bélanger**  
Les vents orfèvres ((Les productions de l'homme renard)

**La Bottine Souriante**  
la traversée de l'atlantique (Virgin)

**Martin Carthy and Dave Swarbrick**  
Straws in the Wind (Topic)

**Finest Kind**  
Silks and Spices (Fallen Angle Music)

**Grey Larsen and André Marchand**  
The Orange Tree (Sleepy Creek Music)

**Marchand, Miron and Ornstein**  
Le bruit court dans la ville (Talentcourt musique)

**Ni sarpe ni branche**  
Quand ça vient l'temps ((Minuit Dans La Cuisine)

**Fred Pellerin**  
Silence (Disques Tempête Inc.)

**Les têtes de violon**  
Airs tordues, Crooked tunes (Independent)

**Vasen**  
Trio (NorthSide)

Pascal's choices are in alphabetical order. His latest release with Yann Falquet is called *Princes et habitants*. Their feature runs on page 34.

## blackbyrd music

1. **Patty Griffin**  
Servant Of Love (Independent)
2. **Chris Stapleton**  
Traveller (Mercury)
3. **Ryan Adams**  
1989 (Blue Note)
4. **Rhianna Giddens**  
Tomorrow Is My Turn (Nonesuch)
5. **Joanna Newsom**  
Divers (Drag City)
6. **Leon Bridges**  
Coming Home (Sony)
7. **Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats**  
Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats (Fantasy)
8. **The Hearts**  
Equal Love (Independent)
9. **Gary Clark Jr.**  
The Story Of Sonny Boy Slim (Independent)
10. **Josh Ritter**  
Sermon On the Rocks (Pytheas)

Based on album sales for November, December and January, 2015, at Blackbyrd Music 10442-82 Ave., Edmonton, AB, T6E 2A2 and at 1126-17 Ave., SW, Calgary, AB, T2T 0B4



## highlife records

1. **St Germain**  
St Germain (Warner)
2. **Various Artists**  
Lost In Mali (Riverboat)
3. **Buffy Sainte-Marie**  
Power In The Blood (True North)
4. **Leon Bridges**  
Coming Home (Columbia)
5. **Itamar Erez & Yshai Afterman**  
New Dawn (Independent)
6. **Songhoy Blues**  
Music In Exile (Atlantic)
7. **Nina Simone**  
Sings The Blues (RCA)
8. **Ali Farka Toure & Ry Cooder**  
Talking Timbuktu (World Circuit)
9. **Gary Clark Jr.**  
The Story of Sonny Boy Slim (Warners)
10. **Ballake Sissoko & Vincent Segal**  
Musique de Nuit (Six Degrees)

Based on album sales for November, December and January, 2015-16, at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

## heritage music & posters

1. **Leon Bridges**  
Coming Home (Columbia)
2. **Los Lobos**  
Gates Of Gold (429 Records)
3. **Colin Linden**  
Rich In Love (Stony Plain Records)
4. **Tim Williams**  
So Low (LowdenProud)
5. **Chris Stapleton**  
Traveller (Mercury)
6. **Dale Watson**  
Call Me Insane (Red House)
7. **Seasick Steve**  
Walkin' Man (Rhino)
8. **Big Sugar**  
Calling All The Youth (eONE)
9. **Emmylou Harris & Linda Ronstadt**  
Live On KSWM (Laser Media)
10. **Stevie Ray Vaughan**  
The King's Head (Left Field)

Based on album sales for November, December, and January, 2015-16, at Heritage Posters & Music, 1502-11 Ave., SW, Calgary, AB, T3C 0M9



Corb Lund



Songhoy Blues

## backstreet records

1. **Ron Hynes**  
Face to the Gale (EMI)
2. **Old Man Luedecke**  
Domestic Eccentric (True North)
3. **Bonnie Prince Billy**  
Pond Scum ((Drag City)
4. **Ben Caplan**  
Birds with Broken Wings (Warners)
5. **Tomato Tomato**  
So It Goes (Porch Light Studios)
6. **Freakwater**  
Scheherazade (Bloodshot)
7. **Kurt Vile**  
b'lieve I'm goin' down (Matador)
8. **Joanna Newsom**  
Divers (Drag City)
9. **Ryley Walker**  
Primrose Green (Dead Oceans)
10. **Tinariwen**  
Live In Paris (Anti)

Based on album sales for November, December and January, 2015-16, at Backstreet Records, at their Saint John and Fredricton, NB, stores.

## soundscapes

1. **Bob Dylan**  
The Cutting Edge: Bootleg Series Vol.12 (Columbia)
2. **Joanna Newsom**  
Divers (Drag City)
3. **The Wainwright Sisters**  
Songs In The Dark (Pias America)
4. **Neil Young**  
Neil Young and the Bluenote Cafe (Warners)
5. **Van Morrison**  
Astral Weeks (Warners)
6. **Dave Rawlings Machine**  
Nashville Obsolete (Acony Records)
7. **Willie Thrasher**  
Spirit Child (Light In The Attic)
8. **Lindi Ortega**  
Faded Gloryville (Last Gasp)
9. **Corb Lund**  
Things That Can't Be Undone (New West Records)
10. **Sufjan Stevens**  
Carrie and Lowell (Asthmatic Kitty)

Based on album sales for November, December and January, 2015-16, at Soundscapes, 572 College Street, Toronto, On, M6G 1B3

## ckua radio

1. **Josh Ritter**  
Sermon On the Rocks (Pytheas)
2. **The Hearts**  
Equal Love (Independent)
3. **Fat Freddy's Drop**  
Bays (Drop)
4. **Steve Martin & Edie Brickell**  
So Familiar (Rounder)
5. **Tim Williams**  
So Low (LowdenProud)
6. **Patty Griffin**  
Servant Of Love (Independent)
7. **Bob Dylan**  
The Bootleg Series Vol.12 (Columbia)
8. **Rhiannon Giddens**  
Factory Girl (Nonesuch)
9. **Royal Wood**  
Ghost Light (MapleMusic)
10. **Blick Bassy**  
Ako (Independent)
11. **The James Hunter 6**  
Hold On! (Daptone)
12. **Kacy & Clayton**  
Strange Country (Big White Cloud)
13. **Jim Lauderdale**  
Soul Searching (Sky Crunch)
14. **Blue Rodeo**  
Live At Massey Hall (Warners)
15. **Los Lobos**  
Gates Of Gold (429 Records)
16. **The Provincial Archive**  
The Provincial Archive (Consonant)
17. **Roger Roger**  
Fairweather (Independent)
18. **The Knickerbocker All-Stars**  
Go Back Home To the Blues (JP Cadillac)
19. **Aoife O'Donovan**  
In the Magic Hour (Yep Roc)
20. **Andy White**  
How Things Are (LowdenProud)

The most-played folk, roots and world music discs on CKUA radio - [www.ckua.org](http://www.ckua.org) - throughout November, December and January, 2015-16.



Aoife O'Donovan



# SWANSONGS

1942-2016

## Otis Clay

Otis Clay, the Blues Hall Of Fame inductee whose soulful, gritty baritone inspired the likes of Bob Seeger and the Anglo-Asian chart-toppers Cornershop, died of a heart attack Jan. 8, in Chicago. He was 73.

Renowned for his gospel and soul-influenced R&B, Clay recorded for such prestigious labels as Atlantic, Hi Records, and Bullseye, scoring several minor hits such as *That's How It Is (When You're In Love)* (1967), *She's About A Mover* (1968)—a riveting cover of Doug Sahm's Tex-Mex party piece, which Clay recorded at famed Muscle Shoals studios—*Tryin' To Live My Life Without You* (1972)—a Top 10 hit for Bob Seeger in 1981—*If I Could Reach Out* (1973), and *All Because Of Your Love* (1977).

While he remained a popular, high-energy live performer throughout his career, Clay's commercial chart success was fleeting. His *The Only Way Is Up*, however, became a disco smash for Yazz and the Plastic Population in 1988. He would also receive further international recognition through Cornershop, who sampled his vocals on *Heavy Soup*, the opening track of their *Handcream for a Generation* (2002). They also included his name on the track *Welcome To Tokyo Otis Clay*, while

recording *Disco and the Halfway to Discontent* under the alias Clinton.

Otis Clay was born Feb. 11, 1942, in Waxhaw, MI, to a musical and religious family, as his website autobiography states. The family moved to Muncie, ID, in 1953 and relocated to Chicago four years later. There he joined the Golden Jubliaries as a 15-year-old, before moving on to tour America with Charles Bridges's Famous Blue Jay Singers.

"We were known as variety singers, or we were billed as [performing] 'Old Negro Spirituals and Plantation Melodies'," wrote Clay.

Hugely influenced by Sam Cooke, Clay soon aspired to record secular songs. While he made several demos for Columbia in 1962, the label passed on him. The independent One-Derful! Records didn't, however, and Clay's first single, *Flame In Your Heart*, became a local hit. Still, it wasn't until his fifth release, *That's How It Is (When You're In Love)*, that he landed on the Billboard R&B national charts, peaking at No. 34.

Clay would go on to record 17 albums and receive a Grammy nomination for Best Traditional R&B Vocal Performance for his gospel recording *Walk A Mile In My Shoes* (2007). He was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 2013. In addition to his musical career, Clay actively contributed to various non-profit organizations on Chicago's West Side.

Roddy Campbell

## Mack McCormick

Folklorist and Writer

Born 1930

Born Robert Burton McCormick on Aug. 3, 1930, in Pittsburgh, PA, Mack McCormick made it his life's work to rescue musicians, particularly blues musicians, from the crimes of forgetfulness and ignorance. There were few like him, and he was one of the few who genuinely helped shape the musical consciousness of modern times. Maybe in the minor way that vernacular music leaches into popular forms. Maybe at a remove or two, say, through the Robert Johnson/Rolling Stones interconnectivity.

Naturally, he undertook his research and sleuthing in the pre-Internet age. He tracked down the bygone-era recording artist Mance Lipscomb in Navasota, TX, and brought him to Arhoolie Records. He found kinfolks of Blind Lemon Jefferson and Robert Johnson and interviewed them. Heeding *Railroadin' Some* and the locations mentioned in it, he brought a fierce new intelligence to Henry (Ragtime Texas) Thomas's legacy for Herwin Records.

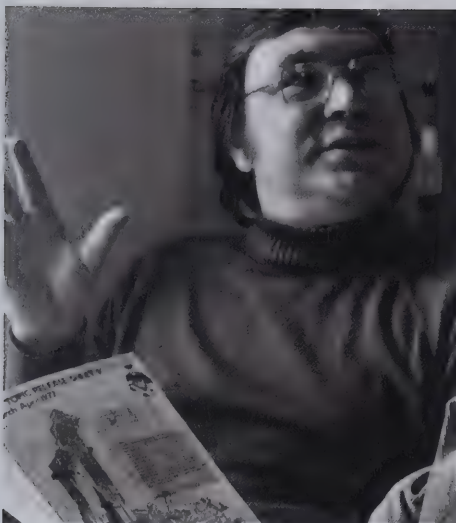
In any field of endeavour there is plentiful scope for collaborations, alliances, and rivalries. Mack enjoyed plenty of those. At times the operative word seems to have been enjoyed. He was better at starting the race than crossing the finishing line. The music historian Tony Russell, who first met him in 1975 and had on-off contact with him thereafter, defined it to me as his "inability to finish anything".

He remembers 'staking out' a property—probably too Chandleresque because they just sat outside in a car—where the Mack IDed murderer of Robert Johnson was living. He was writing his fabled Johnson biography titled *The Biography of a Phantom*. What he could have delivered is the big imponderable. Nevertheless, he added immeasurably to the historical narrative. He died on Nov. 18, 2015, at his home in Houston, TX—the state that had fed his mind so much.

Ken Hunt







## Roy Harris

Traditional Folksinger

Born 1933

The Death of Roy Harris on Feb. 9 is the year's first irreplaceable loss to the English folk scene and the British folk revival. There never was one expressway to the heart of British folk music. Two roads dominated. One was via records, the other via folk clubs. An important and constructive critic-champion of the scene's foibles, frustrations, and fermenting role in music, Harris was a folk club performer through and through. No wonder he became director of the Loughborough Festival.

Born on June 15, 1933, like many folkies of his generation he was a graduate of the skiffle boom. First coming across folksong during national service, he came to the fore through founding the Nottingham Traditional Music Club in 1967. Nottingham already had a thriving ad hoc folk scene, out of which the likes of Anne Briggs and Andy Irvine emerged. He brought structure.

A fine, tradition-based, unaccompanied singer, as well as recording a succession of albums under his own name for Topic, Fellside, and Wild Goose, he contributed to a number of anthologies. His 1979 retelling of *Barbry Allen* on *Folk Festival – A Celebration of Music Recorded at the Sidmouth International Festival* (2004) coos mystery. In 1979, Fellside released his milestone album, *The Rambling Soldier*. The companion piece to folklorist Roy Palmer's book of the same name about soldiering in the lower ranks for Penguin, its expanded CD edition appeared in 1997. A die-hard propagandist for folk music, he presented a long-running radio show on the subject on Radio Nottingham.

Ken Hunt

## Long John Hunter

Blues Guitarist and Extrovert Showman

Born 1931

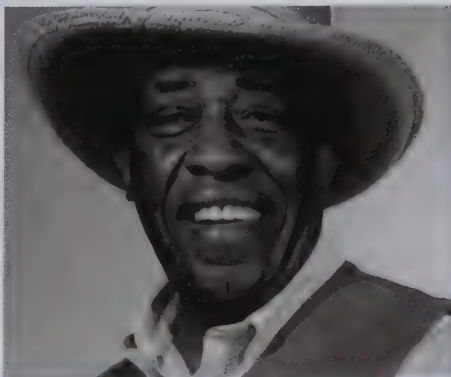
One of the greatest showmen performing in the blues idiom, Long John Hunter rose out of the infamous frontier bars that stretched from El Paso, TX, to Juarez, Mexico, to gain national recognition as "a top-notch singer, guitarist, and unbridled wildman performer...a raw, feral talent bursting with energy," as the *Los Angeles Times* succinctly noted. His admirers over the years included Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, James Brown, and Buddy Holly. Hunter died in his sleep Jan. 4, at home in Phoenix, AZ. He was 84.

Born July 13, 1931, in Ringgold, LA, Hunter was somewhat of a late bloomer, picking up the guitar when he was 21 after watching B.B. King star at Raven Club in Beaumont, TX. A year later, Hunter performed in that same club. He made his bones around Houston and Port Arthur before moving to El Paso, only to perform across the border bridge at the Lobby Bar on Avenida Juárez from 1957 to 1970. Bobby Fuller (*I Fought The Law*) frequently dropped by to see Hunter play.

His reputation soon spread around the region as much for his showmanship as his musicianship. He would frequently play on the neck of his guitar with one hand while swinging from the rafters above the stage with his other.

Hunter's limited recordings began with the single *She Used To Be My Woman/Crazy Baby* (1954) for Don Robey's Houston label, Duke. He released several more for Yucca from 1961 to 1963, which the Dutch Double Trouble label later compiled into the LP *Texas Border Town Blues* (1986). *Ride With Me* (1993), though, is widely considered Hunter's first significant album. That disc brought national acclaim, which increased considerably when he signed to Chicago-based Alligator Records and released *Border Town Legend* (1996) and *Swinging From The Rafters* (1997). These two discs solidified Hunter's international reputation.

Roddy Campbell



## Andy M. Stewart

Traditional Folkinger and Songwriter

Born 1952

Through such superb albums as *Caledonia's Hardy Sons*, *So Many Partings*, and *Wild And Beautiful*, Silly Wizard revitalized Scotland's traditional music and songs during the '70s and '80s. At the heart of the band's key lineup sat the deft instrumental intuitiveness of brothers Johnny (fiddle) and Phil (accordion) Cunningham, Martin Hadden (bass), Gordon Jones (guitar), and their fine, fine frontman Andy M. Stewart (vocals, tenor banjo). As Archie Fisher wrote on the sleeve notes of *Hardy Sons*: "The combined expertise of Silly Wizard is the mark of collective brilliance".

Andy M. Stewart—the prominent middle initial distinguished him from the late, twee, tartan-clad music hall celebrity with the same name—would also evolve into a wonderful songwriter, both with the band and later partnerships, first with Manus Lunny and later Gerry O'Beirne. Stewart's songs covered all the emotional bases, from the hilarious *Ramblin' Rover* to the eternally moving *Valley of Strathmore*. Live, his comical introductions to songs often took more time than the singing.

Born in the village of Alyth, Perthshire, Scotland, Sept 8, 1952, Stewart went to school in nearby Blairgowrie where he met Dougie MacLean and Martin Hadden. Together they would form Puddock's Well. All three would join Silly Wizard at one time or another—Stewart in 1974 and he stayed until they disbanded in 1988. The band recorded 10 studio albums and Stewart released four more solo, plus three with Manus Lunny.

Failed spinal surgery in 2012 left him paralyzed from the chest down. He died from a stroke Dec. 27.

Roddy Campbell



# Edmonton Folk Music Festival



**August, 4-7, 2016**





Photo By: Lorie Miseck

## Arthur Fafard

Here's one for the history books: Arthur Fafard, owner of Blackbyrd Myoozik record store in Edmonton, AB, has just opened a second franchise. So much for the demise of record retail. What's his secret? **James Gaffney** poses the questions.

**You have recently opened Blackbyrd Myoozik in Calgary; how is it doing?**

We opened a new store in Calgary in November and so far the response has been great. We are still the “new kid on the block” so I expect sales will grow as customer awareness increases.

**In a world of Internet shopping and digital downloads, you seem to have a winning formula that encourages people to visit your stores. What is the secret to your success?**

In all honesty, I think that I have just continued to do what I enjoy. While it is true that shopping online provides a vast amount of choices, I believe that by presenting a well-curated selection of music we can help the music fan cut through the clutter. Blackbyrd has built up the trust of our customers. I like to think we are knowledgeable, informative, and helpful, and people can appreciate that.

**What are your personal musical tastes and do they influence your business in any way?**

My musical tastes are pretty broad. My personal favourite is jazz, from be-bop to free jazz, so of course we have always a well-stocked jazz section. I'm also a big fan of modern classical composers and all types of electronic music. These genres are not extremely popular but I'm happy if the handful of people in town who are looking for the newest copy of an obscure release can find it in my shop.

**What qualities must your staff possess?**

At present, Blackbyrd has 12 employees, five full time, and seven part time. Nine are active musicians. I find the qualities I need from them are mostly related to their passion for music, but also their capacity to work independently, be proactive, and take initiative. I've also been fortunate to have very little staff turnover. The majority of my employees have stayed for five to seven years so I think that reflects their level of satisfaction working in the store.

**When you opened your first store, did you have a defined direction for the business,**

**with music genres and expansion plans?**

When we opened, we did not have any larger interest beyond opening a store that we ourselves would enjoy shopping in. At the time, indie rock and/or college rock were the main staples, encompassing both vinyl and CDs. The emergence of grunge and the Seattle scene was certainly spurring an interest in new music at that time. We wanted to provide a unique store to carry new bands but were also eager to carry other genres that we felt were under-represented in the more mainstream record stores. So we were ordering jazz, electronic, punk rock, avant garde, world, folk, etc...and, of course, vinyl—always vinyl. I never envisioned opening a second store; now here we are opening a second location in Calgary 22 years later.

**What changes have you made in the last two decades to provide sustainability?**

Initially, a large part of our revenue was driven by the sale of used CDs. The used CD was really the bread and butter of our business from 1992 until 2005 or 2006. Used CD sales began to decline with the rise of the Internet and file sharing and we ceased to buy them entirely about three years ago. We do, however, still carry a substantial number of new releases and back catalogue of important artists. In fact, we tried to keep every Bob Dylan CD that was

available in stock for years, no small feat with the number of titles involved.

Of course, the incredible increase in the popularity of vinyl in the past five to seven years has really spurred the growth of my business. Increased sales of vinyl have more than compensated for the decline in CD sales. In fact, 2015 was the most successful year in our history. Blackbyrd has always carried vinyl, it is something we have always been passionate about, and we were therefore in a unique position to expand our vinyl selection as we saw demand grow. Currently, our sales are approximately two-thirds vinyl versus one-third CD. It is a little ironic that the market has gone full circle. Now people who are passionate about music purchase vinyl at the local record store, back to where it all began for me.

Blackbyrd has also established an excellent special-order service with distributors all over the world on a weekly basis. This enables us to fill special orders very quickly—sometimes within a few days. And we can often obtain titles that are unavailable elsewhere at a competitive price. I believe that kind of service encourages repeat business, customer loyalty, and good word of mouth.

As well, we supplement our income with ticket sales for gigs. Although we take only a small commission, ticket sales raise our profile and help make the store more of a “community hub” than just simply a retail outlet.



# Introducing Trent Severn



Sometimes you need rules. Southern Ontario-based folk trio Trent Severn has three, says guitarist/banjoist/songwriter Dayna Manning: songs will not be of the personal, “diary writing” variety; the trio must be able to perform live and with no additional musicians any song it records; and, the band can never overwhelm its members’ personal lives. For a songwriter, says Manning, having rules “narrows things down, forces you to know the limitations on (what) you can dream up.” Think of it as setting boundaries for your children so they have the freedom to flourish.

Formed in 2011 and with two nominations at the 2013 Canadian Folk Music Awards, the band is named for the Trent Severn Waterway, a national historic site in Southern Ontario. With Emm Gryner on bass and Lindsay Schindler on fiddle, the trio focuses its stricture-based songs on contemporary Canadiana.

Those songs include Manning’s *From Canada*, a track on the fine, new album *Trillium* (the three-petalled plant is also Ontario’s provincial flower). The track celebrates Ontario artist, inventor, and ultralight aircraft enthusiast William Lishman. He pioneered the use of ultralight aircraft to lead captive-raised, endangered species such as the whooping crane on migration routes so that they become self-sustaining.

Manning, a solo folk/pop artist prior to Trent Severn, heard about Lishman’s efforts while at the 2014 CFMAs. Inspired, she contacted Lishman and blended a poem he’d written about his bird adventures into her song. The trio performed the tune at the 2015 awards. “It came full circle,” says Manning.

Bandmate Gryner’s contributions include the romping concert favourite *Stealin’ Syrup*, a co-write with Manning. Sung from the viewpoint of one of the thieves, it’s about the multi-million-dollar heist of maple syrup in Quebec in 2012. Although the story sounds comical, Gryner says it brought to light the dark underworld of a product we Canadians take for granted. That juxtaposition made the caper a good song topic.

Gryner comes out of a primarily pop background. Best known as a solo artist, she also sang and played keyboards for a time with the touring band of the late David Bowie, a man whose artistic independence she admires. Gryner also collaborated with astronaut Chris Hadfield on his cover of Bowie’s *Space Oddity*, recorded partly aboard the International Space Station.

Trent Severn fulfils more than just Gryner’s musical hunger. “I found being a solo artist a little lonely after a while. It’s great to be able to share the experience.”

Unlike her colleagues, Schindler is not an original band member. She joined in 2015, replacing founding member Laura C. Bates, who left to pursue other musical genres. The new album includes a couple of Bates’s compositions but none by her replacement.

Schindler, who produced *Trillium*, contrasts the simplicity of the small, acoustic band with the complexity of its music. “The arrangements are so intricate and interesting because no line is ever repeated, whether it’s vocally or instrumentally.”

Schindler also plays with the Celtic/world beat Rant Maggie Rant in which she’s the sole female. Biggest difference between playing with men and women? “With Trent Severn, there’s always time allotted to get ready for a show. Guys just have to change their pants and shirt and away they go whereas I might like to fix my hair and put some makeup on. It’s nice not being the only one needing to do that stuff.”

– By Pat Langston







# Introducing Vince Collins

“That’s one of dad’s boats. He built about five or six. He built her, and my mother had the old-fashioned sewing machine and made the sails for her.” Eighty-year-old accordion player Vince Collins points to a picture of a schooner imprinted on his latest CD, *Over Home*.

Released in December 2015, it is a wonderful assortment of traditional tunes, engaging stories of life in rural Newfoundland, and expert playing from Collins and his son, Glen.

“I suggested that the CD be called *Over Home* because when I was a kid and dad would put me to bed, he would always tell me a story about things that had happened over home,” says Glen. “At first I thought he was making them up, but the stories were all true.”

Collins hails from St. Anne’s, a resettled community on the west side of Placentia Bay on the south coast of Newfoundland. The town was awash with skilled musicians, including his parents, who were both fine accordion players. He picked up the accordion at the age of 13, and within two years he was attending the local dances playing “singles and doubles” (Newfoundland terminology for jigs and polkas). “We would play for old-fashioned square dances and the lancers, too. I was a shy guy, I was half nervous, but I used to get through it,” he laughs.

In the late ’50s and early ’60s, the American base at Argentia exerted a strong cultural influence on the musicians of the area, and country music and guitar picking became part of the local repertoire. The music at parties would consist of a unique blend of old-fashioned dance tunes, 14-verse traditional ballads, and country songs from Chet Atkins and Kitty Wells. In spite of this hodgepodge of styles and influences, Collins continued to keep the accordion music of Placentia Bay alive, and eventually added some of his own original tunes to the mix.

In 1966, Collins moved to St. John’s for work. He married, had a family, and imparted his love of music to his eldest son. A talented guitarist, Glen gravitated towards more contemporary styles of music including pop, rock, and blues, but would often sit and accompany his dad on the old Placentia Bay tunes. He and his father talked about doing a CD, and with the help of Glen’s friend, Great Big Sea’s Bob Hallett, Collins’s first recording, *Lifting Out the Stove*, was released in 2009. The pair continued to record in Glen’s home studio, and eventually collected enough material for a second album.

“I recorded him in fits and starts at home. It eventually came to the point where we had a critical mass of tunes,” says Glen. “The record was done and in our hands a week before dad turned 80.”

Direct transmission of traditional material from older to younger players is no longer as common in Newfoundland and Labrador as it was in the old days. Young folk are more likely to learn songs and tunes in formalized educational settings, or from the Internet and CDs. It is vitally important that our musical heritage be made accessible to both up-and-coming artists and audiences. Collins is doing his part to keep an old tradition alive in modern formats, and plans to keep doing so as long as he is able.

– By Jean Hewson



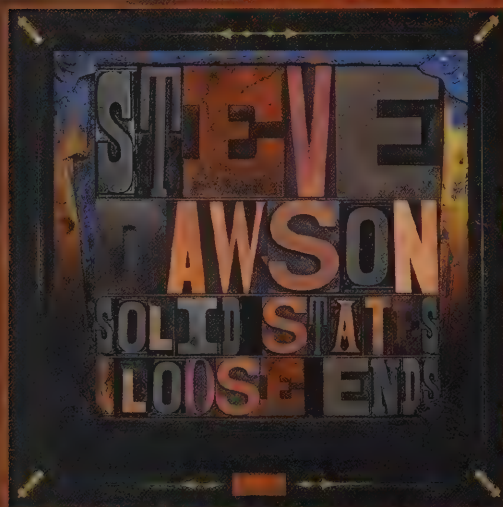




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# STEVE DAWSON

## SOLID STATES AND LOOSE ENDS



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- Apr 2 - Vancouver, BC - Blue Shore Financial Centre for the Performing Arts
- Apr 4 - Whitehorse, Yukon - Yukon Arts Centre
- Apr 6 - Winnipeg, MB - West End Cultural Centre
- Apr 7 - Saskatoon, SK - The Basement
- Apr 8 - Sherwood Park, AB - Festival Place
- Apr 9 - Calgary, AB - Festival Hall

### Steve Dawson solo shows

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- May 14 - Innisfil, ON - Music Up Close
- May 15 - Picton, ON - Acoustic Grill
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- May 18 - Ottawa, ON - Irene's (with Michael Jerome Brown)
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BLACK HEN MUSIC







# Introducing 3hattrio

The sparse, haunting sounds of 3hattrio have an aching quality that gets under your skin. Their second album, *Dark Desert Night*, has a timeless, nostalgic sense, enhanced by their minimal approach.

They carefully place every note, every breath, every word, in its own sonic space, but the result doesn't sound restrained or overly thought out. They call it American Desert Music. "Our studio overlooks 1,000 acres of desert and a virgin river basin," says Hal Cannon, who plays guitar, banjo and sings. "We look out at it when we play. I'm a student of cowboy and pioneer music, which plays into our sound, even though we're not cowboys. There's folk, jazz, Caribbean, old time music and classical in there as well. We have a hard time fitting into any genre, but American Desert Music sounded right."

The trio, which also includes Greg Istock on bass, foot percussion and vocals and Eli Wrangle on violin, met three years ago at a benefit. "Greg and I are friends with Eli's parents. They were raising money to send Eli's school band on a trip. At the end of the evening, we had a jam session. Eli had never jammed before. When we were done, he said, 'I want to do that again.'"

Despite our age differences - Cannon is 67, Istock is 58, Wrangle is 18 - something clicked. We've been playing together for the last three years."

The songs on *Dark Desert Night* balance traditional melodies like "Carry Me Away," with originals. All have an otherworldly, metaphysical quality. "Nothing" is a creation myth, supported by Istock's sinuous bass notes, Wrangle's sparse violin and Cannon's spacey banjo picking. Cannon's vocal tries to convey the sound of nothing, with a lyric that echoes Biblical poetry. "It's the omniscient third person speaking," he laughs,

"but it's hard to speak from nothing without sounding religious." Istock's muted claves and Cannon's muffled banjo make "Tammy's Sister" sound like an Appalachian ballad drifting through space, while the jazzy "Western City Nights" hangs on long, sustained violin notes that support a bluesy, slurred vocal from Istock that slips into a high lonesome wail.

The trio gets together to rehearse and experiment at Istock's studio. They record their rehearsals and the material eventually evolves into the albums Istock produces. "We all have music in our blood," Istock says. "We live in an isolated part of Utah, so we don't get to do too many live gigs, but we rehearse and record every day."

Wrangle is in college, but he's ambitious. He said the band's goal should be an album a year, a schedule they've been keeping. "We're working on our third album right now," Cannon said. "We look at the desert as we play and that space seeps into our music." Istock says they always concentrate on the mood and feel of the music. "We can all play solo, but don't want any instrument to be more noticeable. When we get the feel we like, we know it, and then we hone it."

— By J. Poet





# Introducing Poor Nameless Boy



Ask Poor Nameless Boy, a.k.a. Joel Henderson, anything about music and inevitably he'll turn the conversation back to songwriting. "If somebody wants to talk about songwriting, I will never turn that down. I just love it," he says. "Whether it's collaborating or consulting on people's songs, or people wanting opinions, it's my absolute favourite thing to do."

His interest in process was readily apparent when I asked him if he had a favourite moment from making his latest album, *Bravery*, released in January on Chronograph Records. He picked the transformation the track *Dreamboat* went through. Henderson went into the studio assuming the song was in finished form and ready to record. It wasn't. As soon as he started laying down tracks, he knew something was wrong. "It just didn't feel right. So we put it on hold and went back to it. I was going to replace it with another song, and I thought, 'I don't want to do this, I really like this song'."

"I love that because it was through connecting with the other musicians where I realized, 'no, I think there's a better way to do this'. The original ghost track was not the song that came out."

In the way that other musicians wax poetic about gear or performance techniques, Henderson will talk endlessly about the craft of songwriting. Evidence of the power of his storytelling abilities can be found in the way Chronograph sought him out based on a song from his 2011 EP, *Sleep It Through*. He was snagged after a showcase at Folk Alliance, and a series of conversations over several months eventually led to a deal. Henderson was ready: "I was saying to myself, 'OK, if there's an opportunity where it seems like the right fit with a label, I would do that'."

*Bravery* is the result of those conversations. Chronograph helped Henderson secure a dream team of collaborators, including producer Brad Prosko, fiddler Carmelle Pretzlaw, and Joel's brother, country musician

Chris Henderson, on backing vocals.

Henderson makes it a priority to keep the local scene going. "The more that I got involved with the Saskatchewan music scene, I was taken aback by how many fantastic artists there are," he says. Based in Regina, he frequently plays locally and recorded his album at the city's Prosko's B-Rad Studio.

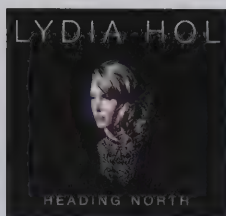
It would be easy to align Henderson's songwriting style with those he admires: the gentle, mournful tunes of Lucas Chaisson; the vivid storytelling of B.C.'s Mike Edel. Yet while the intimate, slow tunes (*Radio Return* and *Atlantic Ocean*) are where Henderson shines on *Bravery*, the energy of the rock-based, heavier arrangements on *River and Trees* and *30 Photographs* plant him firmly amongst his Americana peers and make for a thrilling interruption among slower tracks.

While his moniker might suggest Henderson is writing in isolation in the middle of the Prairies, in reality he is most charged by his interactions with fellow musicians, whether they happen in the studio, at conferences like Folk Alliance, or spontaneously while on tour. He is evidence that the music community in Western Canada is stronger than ever.

— By Gillian Turnbull







# Introducing Lydia Hol

On a wet January evening, Vancouver's St. James Hall was buzzing like a summer hive for the launch of Lydia Hol's debut *Heading North*—evidence that the B.C. artist has built a strong following of fans and fellow musicians through her work in hosting evenings and tours with other songwriters with a focus on craft and community.

"It's interesting to see the audience is quite varied—my peers as well as older people, and some younger," she says, interviewed later. "I've been lucky in having people follow the journey, seeing me get more and more comfortable onstage, and hearing new songs."

Hol grew up both in White Rock, a seaside town just south of Vancouver, and on Pender Island, in the southern Gulf Islands. She has a warm, unforced voice and always loved singing, but used to suffer from terrible stage fright. So as a teenager Hol at first kept her music hidden. When songs started to flow she began playing at open-mics around town—while swotting for an English lit degree at UBC. Later she studied jazz vocals and music theory.

"I toured with a rock band, playing keyboards, which helped me get over the stage fright. And as I wasn't the front person I was able to see and observe that role. Then I tried my hand at recording six songs with a group of musicians for an EP [*Boats*, 2012]. It was very 'pots and pans'—very stripped down."

On *Heading North*, however, Hol works with a rich sonic and instrumental palette courtesy of 14 musicians, among them trumpeter John Korsrud, organist Chris Gestrin, and violinist Jesse Zubot—leading lights of the West Coast jazz scene. The instrumentation also includes viola, cello, and trombone. *Couldn't Let It Go*, one of several stand-out cuts, came directly from Hol's activities as host of songwriter rings and shows.

"For the past couple of years, I've been curating the Acoustic Guitar Project—original songs written and recorded in a week—out of New York. Ten artists share the same guitar, and each has a week to write a song

with it. At the end we do a celebration, and share the new songs in a concert. I had two days left to write mine, and the CBC asked if I could come down and play it. I was over on Pender, where I do my writing, and sat down and it was like, 'I need a song and I need it now'. It was just a rush of writing, like someone else was writing it, because the song is kind of scary." And it has a wicked swing.

Hol crafts lyrics with care, adding little twists to a song's construction, and splashes of colour and mood. As her major inspirations she credits Nic Jones and Anaïs Mitchell but most of all the six months spent in and around Dublin as a student.

"I did a lot of travelling around Ireland and going to sessions, being a fly on the wall, watching. The community there was all-ages. They had a big influence on me, and also showed me the role of a singer. Seeing someone stand up and sing all alone was the most musical thing that I'd ever heard."

— By Tony Montague







## Night Drive — A Memoir

Garnet and Stan Rogers

Photo: Courtesy of Garnet Rogers

**Garnet Rogers's hilarious autobiography highlights his adventures with his late brother Stan. This exclusive excerpt details a tour of New Jersey.**

**W**e had a run of gigs on the East Coast of the States, set up by a woman friend of Stan's who had been doing our U.S. bookings for a couple of years. She has passed now, and so I won't reveal her name or identify her in any way.

She was a decent enough sort, and she loved Stan, but she was terrible as an agent. She was good-hearted, well-meaning, and hard-working but the gigs she got us over the couple of years we worked with her were almost without exception disastrous, and it was wearing us down. She had set up that near-fatal first run for Stan and me a few years before, and later the dreadful Baltimore incident in the apartment with the troll like creature. And that pretty much set the pattern in terms of bad routing, terrible money, and sheer breath-taking incompetence. We

were having a miserable time with her, and to make it worse she was the best we could find.

Stan had an interview at a folk friendly radio station in Teaneck, NJ, one morning.

David [Allen Eadie — bass player] and I were surplus to needs. The studio was small and cramped, and anyway, we both had an ugly tendency to indulge in sarcasm when Stan had a chance to wax fulsome on the air.

He didn't want to take any chances with us in the studio.

"You guys can listen out here. We'll be going out live."

Great.

So Stan did the interview solo, and Eadie and I sat in the van, in the parking lot behind the building. We fiddled with the radio controls until we heard the theme music. (Why is it always a damned banjo?)

David lit a smoke, and I poured out a mid-morning dram to go with my coffee.

Stan came on after a while, and was being typically upbeat and enthusiastic about the tour, and the great reception we were getting everywhere. This didn't sound like our tour.

Who the Hell was he talking about?

We could hear him going into full Barry White mode, getting in close to the mic to emphasize the bass in his voice.

"Yeah, the whole tour has been sold out, and we've been getting standing ovations every night. It's been fantastic."

Who the hell was this?

Was he seeing another band on the side?

David flicked his smoke out the window into the bushes where it would probably start a deadly brush fire when we left.

"What a complete crock of shit."

I said, "Jesus, yeah. Turn it off. It's embarrassing."

Before David could reach the radio, we heard Stan say, "You know, playing music is like sex, really, every night. It really is. That kind of intensity onstage. It's like you're making love to the entire audience. It's better than sex, actually."

Jesus.

We looked at each other in horror.

"Turn it off. Oh man, before I barf."

David hit the switch, and we sat for a couple of minutes, mulling over what we had just heard.

He lit another smoke and did a French inhale, letting the smoke trickle up from his mouth to his nostrils, and blew it out.

He turned back to look at me.

He said, "Your brother?"

"Yeah?"

"He uh...he's had...um...he's actually had sex? Has he?"

I shook my head. "Doesn't sound like it to me."

Time passed.

We were getting bored.

I sipped my coffee and Wild Turkey, and opened a magazine, which I had only read a dozen times.

David stared glumly out the window.

More time passed.

I looked at my watch. Christ, had it stopped?

Presently David turned around in the front passenger seat.

He said, "OK, It's time to play Guess What Hit You."

"Ah shit, no. I hate that game."

"Come on." He pulled a quarter out of his pocket. "I'll toss you for first turn."

"God dammit."

"Come on. Do it."

Guess What Hit You was a pretty simple game, and our final fall back position in times of extreme boredom.

One person would place a stolen Motel 6 pillowcase over his head, and wait.

The other would wallop the subject over the head with something, and the victim would have to...guess...what...hit...him.

If you guessed correctly, it became your turn



to be the hitter.

It wasn't a very good game, and there was an unfortunate tendency for the violence of the game to escalate. We'd had to conduct serious negotiations so as to enact an arms limitation treaty.

You could no longer use, for example, a live animal.

And nothing dangerous, or wet.

I lost the coin toss.

I was first.

I put the pillowcase over my head and waited.

WHAM!

"OOWWWW! OH SHIT. That was your fist."

"Nope. Guess again."

I waited.

WHAM!

"AH JESUS! God damn it. That was a book."

"Nope. Guess again."

My ears were ringing.

I was waiting for the next blow, when I heard the driver's door open, and Stan said, "What the hell is this?"

I took off my hood, and saw David as he was straightening up from hiding the tire jack handle under the seat.

"Nothing. We had to turn the radio off to save the battery, and we got bored."

"So you didn't hear it?"

"No, not really."

"Shit. I thought it went pretty well, it was a good interview."

We still had a gig to do that afternoon. A matinee. We drove to the address on the contract.

It wasn't a venue, as such. There was no club. Just a nice house on a quiet residential street.

We pulled up and got out and walked around to the backyard patio, where we could hear

voices. We could smell barbecue smoke. Hell, this could be OK.

Well, the long and the short of it was the promoter had either forgotten about us, or had never known about us in the first place. There was no gig, and he was expecting guests for a nice Sunday of watching football on the tube.

Fucking agent.

I don't recall what sort of weird negotiations took place over the next half-hour or so.

I had gone back to the van, to sulk and plot a murder, but it fell out that we actually set up our gear, and played a short set in the rec room, in front of the TV, for a couple of bored and pissed off teenagers, and a handful of mystified guests who were also not happy about missing the big game

We packed up.

Stan collected some sort of fee, a pittance, really, and we left with our tails between our legs.

There was an uncomfortable and depressed

silence as Stan threaded the van through the narrow streets out towards the Jersey Turnpike. We weren't to know it at the time, of course, but Bruce Springsteen was at that moment probably only just miles away, getting ready to play in front of a couple of thousand rabid fans and have just what Stan had been talking about on the radio, three hours of tantric sex with a sweating and ecstatic mob.

Maybe, in retrospect, that was why we were having such a miserable time back then; Bruce was using up the entire world supply of fun. There was none left for losers like us.

Stan guided the van into the toll booth and then out onto the Pike, heading north.

I poured another shot of Wild Turkey and handed it over to Stan. He nodded thanks, took a sip, grimaced and shook his head.

We were quiet for a while.

Then I said, "Well, you know, this could be the next big thing. We could just turn up at random, at people's homes, and play until they pay us to leave."

Stan didn't say anything. He lit a smoke and hunched his shoulders and stared fixedly ahead over the steering wheel. I think, like David and I, he was fantasizing about killing our agent, and throwing her body into a chalk pit.

There was another long silence.

I cleared my throat, and took a deep breath. "So...like sex, huh?"

Out of the corner of my eye I could see Stan's face flush.

David spoke up from the back seat, where he was sprawled, staring moodily at the ceiling.

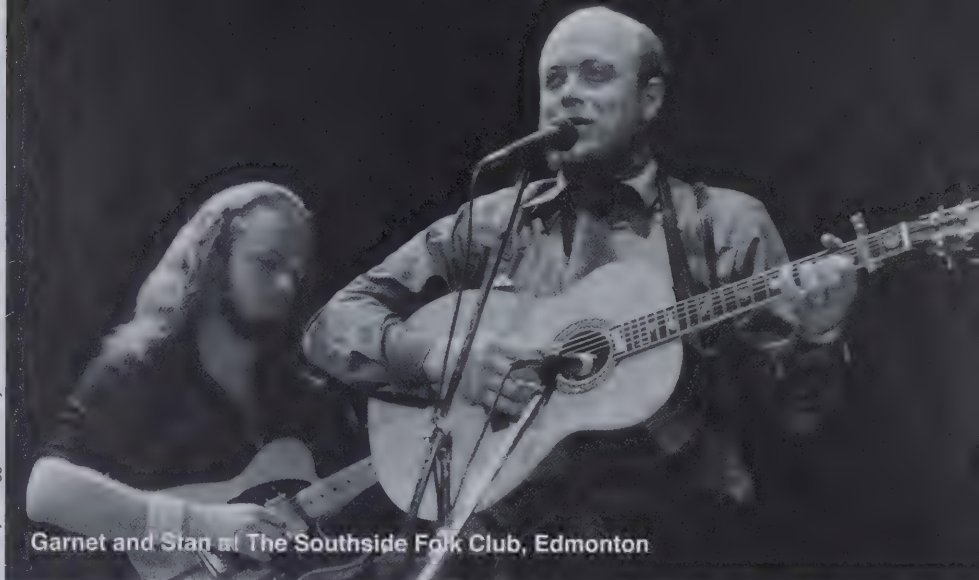
"If playing music is like sex, that gig was like a hand job from a drunken drag queen."

Stan looked back at him in the rear view mirror.

"Well, Dave, if you say so."

We drove to Connecticut.

Photo: By Ian Biggar. Courtesy of The Southside Folk Club.



Garnet and Stan at The Southside Folk Club, Edmonton



Garnet and Stan at the Edmonton folk festival

Photo: Courtesy of The Edmonton Folk Music Festival





## Maja and David

### Two tasteful fiddlers blend traditional Danish, Swedish, and Quebec tunes and songs. By Tony Montague

**W**e've all read stories of girls and guys playing traditional music before they were properly weaned, born into generations of singers and players so the music was acquired by a kind of genetic osmosis and family-gathering fun...

That's not quite how Maja Kjær Jacobsen in Denmark and David Boulanger in Quebec picked up the old music of their homelands. But as soon as they heard it they dived in and have never come out.

"I grew up with a father who's a guitarist and singer and plays folk songs from England, Ireland, Scotland, America," says Maja via Skype. "I listened to all this at home. And from the age of eight I've been going to the Tønder Festival, a huge event that focuses on music from these lands. I started playing violin and guitar and a bit of piano, and enrolled in a music education

in folk program at an academy."

"I just knew about folk songs in English and didn't know there was anything alive in Denmark until I got to a music camp where folk was the main thing. A lot of people in Denmark grow up in the folk dancing but I didn't have that connection. Finding that core community of young people was a revelation. I started focusing increasingly on folk music from Denmark—it made more sense to me. I got a teacher who was a traditional fiddler, and discovered how much detail there is in the Danish tradition. So since I was 18 or 19 I've been focusing on that."

Quick pan across the Atlantic to Montreal, where David Boulanger sits at the computer in his home office space. "I started taking special music programs at school from the age of eight. Traditional music came into my life at around 12. My music prof knew a lot of traditional music because there were fiddlers and singers in his family. He taught us Quebecois dances and told us stories. It really interested me and when I was 16 I started playing in a group. Folk isn't something that was in my own family but it's as if it was something that was missing, because when I really got into the music it made so much sense to me."

As part of her studies, Maja and a group of

other students at her academy visited Quebec, and David was asked to be their violin teacher, and to give workshops. By now, after playing for some years with the band *La Part du Québécois*, he was the lead fiddler of *La Bottine Souritante*. The link was made. A couple of years later, David was invited to teach at another of those Danish traditional folk camps, and Maja was there.

"We're no longer together like that, but we started our romance at that time," says David. "Naturally we wanted to be with each other as much as possible but it's tough when you're so far apart, with all that implies at the financial level, spending long periods of time in another country. We thought, 'Why not work up some pieces that we can play together, and try to get some concert bookings?'. So slowly we started playing and arranging music together, and that quickly became our first album, *Nord* [2012]."

Maja and David found that traditional Danish and traditional Quebecois music had a number of things in common. Both were strongly influenced by music from the Anglo-Celtic world, and Scotland especially—brought by sailors and traders to Denmark and by soldiers and settlers to Quebec—and they shared a percussive underpinning in the way they play dance tunes.



Since releasing *Nord*, Maja and David have toured extensively, mainly in Denmark and Sweden but also in Quebec, and in that time they've refined their arrangements, learning how to blend from Quebecois to Danish or Swedish styles and back again, to keep the elements balanced, and to meld them into innovative and exciting forms. Last year they released *CPH Café YUL*, which features many original tunes in the new Quémark—or is that Danbec?—tradition, and four old songs given tasteful facelifts. Maja and David arranged the music together, but composed alone.

"It's a much more personal album," says David. "We got a grant from Denmark that's mainly intended for composers, so we had to have a certain percentage of new compositions on it. We only used tunes that we'd written since getting together, and so perhaps carrying influences from our travels. We're really happy the album looks like us. It was interesting that the pieces we each chose worked together quite naturally."

David sings two traditional songs—the blues-like *Quelle Triste Sort*, which he got from a recording of Chéticamp, Cape Breton, singer and fiddler Joseph Larade, and *Dans Mon Chemin*, a cheekily ambiguous *chanson à répondre* in the grand Quebecois style: "The old woman with her little distaff, wanted to do turlututu, she wanted to do turluron turlurette, she wanted to hit me with it". The whole performed in a low-key, almost stately way and with more turluron turlutettes carefully placed like aural fig leaves in the narrative.

Maja created a fabulous droning and resonant Scandinavian setting, playing Hardanger fiddle and stomping a haunting beat. On all other tracks, Maja and David's fiddles weave in and out of each other, alternately supplying melody, counterpoint, rhythm, or bass, as on the excellent *Møllerdatteren* and *Pær Fisker*, two traditional songs close to Maja's heart.

"I got them from archival recordings made in 1907 of a man who lived in my home village, a clog maker whose name was Chresten Sørensen-Thomaskjer. There are three or four verses only to each song on the recording so I had to go into the archives, to hand-written versions, to put the rest together. It was a revelation to me to find out that there were specific songs and music from the area where I grew up, and that nobody else in the country is focusing on that. It feels really great to be doing that."



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## The Cactus Blossoms

**With their impeccable harmonies and vintage sound, these two brothers border on greatness.**

By Alan Kellogg

**I**t just doesn't seem right to download *You're Dreaming*, the startling new album by The Cactus Blossoms. Nothing to do with sound quality or royalties or fashion.

It's about feel.

For here is collection of transcendent songs that beg for a diamond stylus to be dropped into a vinyl groove.

From the first bars of the infectious lead tune *Stoplight Kisses*, the unwary listener is transported to another place, another time, another ether altogether. Whether or not that journey is perceived as drawing back or moving forward is very much a matter of personal perspective. I happen to fall in the latter category of admir-

ers, or maybe it's just a matter of witnessing something floating above it all. The year is still young but this may turn out to be the most singularly arresting album of the year.

At first blush, you couldn't argue with those who reckon Blossoms Jack Torrey and Page Burkum have somehow channelled early-ish Don and Phil Everly, backed by an all-star band of Sun Records sidemen, with Sam Phillips (or a time-travelling T-Bone Burnett) twiddling the faders.

That said, there is also something else, something enigmatic afoot here, not that the two (blood) brothers can exactly put their fingers on what it might be. Torrey sums it up by writing: "With a cast of characters, experiences, and personal perspectives, set in simple rhymes and sung in harmony, we try to paint a picture in your mind."

Mission accomplished, trust me. In search of further illumination, a call was placed to the Twin Cities of Minnesota, spawning ground and still home to the siblings. They—five years apart in their 20s—still hang their chapeaux in the same northeast Minneapolis district they

grew up in, sons of a musician father.

Jack explains. "It's an old, working-class neighbourhood, full of bars, immigrant hangouts, old churches, sort of an island where the freeways don't run. A lot of people in our family were musical, not pros, but musical. My grandfather was in a gospel quartet."

"It was just part of life, looking back now," echoes Page.

Jack: "The early influences for me were the storytellers—Dylan, Ramblin' Jack Elliot, the Beat writers. I think I first gravitated to folk music because of the simplicity of it, and the fact that you could fairly easily play and sing great songs without the pressure of writing your own."

And what the about the family thing, the vocal harmonies seemingly so tight as only possible via DNA? Page: "Well, I have to say the Carter Family was an eye-opener, not to mention an option. Harmony singing just comes naturally to me for some reason. It's a gift I didn't have to work for."

In fact, venerable though their sound may seem to be, the two have only been working



together for five years or so. Jack did the solo busking thing for a time. “Well, contrary to what some might say, there was never a lot of money in it, maybe enough to buy a meal. But you learn from it.”

They cite an extended Monday night residency at Minneapolis’s celebrated Turf Club as a major career building block.

“It was the first place I ever really played when I was 19, 10 years ago,” recalls Jack. “It’s a long, open room with some pillars, a beautiful old bar, some great art deco light fixtures, a very cool, honky-tonk vibe.”

“We got to love that place and were so lucky that they welcomed us,” adds Page. “It’s where we were able to tighten up, to learn how to put together three hours of music.”

Demographics? “Ah,” observes Jack, “our audiences were and still are very different people, all ages, all persuasions. I’m really not sure what they have in common, other than obviously enjoying what we do.”

In fact, it was another fan, Chicago singer/songwriter/guitarist J.D. McPherson who produced the album, apparently very much to the satisfaction of the Blossoms. Jack: “We bumped into him playing around town and at different festivals, and ended up opening for him on some shows. We were talking about making this album and he asked if we wanted him to produce. We were like: ‘What does that mean?’. And as it turned out we wanted to do it the same way—sparse, minimal, as live sounding as possible. And we stayed true to that plan, literally recording it in a living room.”

Page: “We were very fortunate that the musicians were so solid, so tasteful at whittling down the songs to their essentials. These guys could be playing with anyone, they’re so good and intuitive.”

Jack writes most of the songs but Page contributed the atmospheric *Powder Blue* to the mix, one of the standouts.

“I got the idea for that song a couple of years ago in Portland, coming up first with a chorus. It’s simple, there’s not much to it, but it’s meant to capture a feeling, the mysterious side of love. I hate to use the word dreamy, but...”

Asked to spotlight one of his favourites, Jack selects *Mississippi*—“*I watch the sun yellow and brown / Sinking suns in every time.*”

“That just came together almost there. It’s a little vague by design, thinking about jumping off... Or...”

And what does Jack hope listeners will take away from *You’re Dreaming*?

“I don’t want to push anything on anyone. At the end of the day we know we did our best and realize that it is our privilege to play music for a living. And. Hope you like it!”

The duo, as any play on YouTube will attest, are a very effective two-man band. On the other hand, performing live with a full complement of players—as will be the case on many tour dates this year—is the ideal.

Jack: “Our biggest thing right now it getting out on the road, playing as often as we possibly can. We’re actually excited about it.”

BTW, just where does that name come from, considering Minnesota’s relative lack of succulents? The two explain that the cactus is one tough hombre of a plant that survives and even thrives on very little, surely a helpful trait in the music business of the 21st century. And also: is it The Cactus Blossoms the noun? Or might it be The Cactus Blossoms, the verb? It’s up to us to decide, they say.

And although it will also be up to the public to compartmentalize the Blossoms as some sort of beautifully rendered throwback to the 1950s or the preferred Not That, Jack says they are not losing any sleep over tags.

“We’re stoical about it, and after all, it’s our fault. What we’re up to is hard to explain, the path and how we got to it, and how we learned by proxy. We are just tried to do this as two singers with two guitars, and this is what came out...”



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Lori Yates

## She's travelled a long and ragged road to finally make a career-defining record.

By Pat Langston

**D**isquieting doesn't begin to describe *Ghost of Josephine*. A murder ballad on Lori Yates's sterling new alt-country album *Sweetheart of the Valley*, the song is written from the perspective of a man who kills a woman for no discernible reason and is haunted forever after by her ghost.

Josephine, we're told, took her death well, "she didn't cry," and we immediately wonder

why she simply submitted. Then the penny drops: it's the killer who's reporting the easy death, and why would we trust his words?

Economical, jarring, ultimately mysterious, the song's a honed piece of writing. So it's a surprise when Hamilton-based Yates, who started as a punk/new wave performer in Toronto in the 1980s and made a brief splash in the national commercial country world in the '90s only to vanish from the larger scene for years, says that her new songs "kind of tumbled out. There wasn't a lot of editing. I'm the kind of writer that I pick up my guitar, and the words and melodies fall into place at the same time. I see the songs, the location, the characters."

And while she says she's not "analytical" about her songs, she does recognize the shift to storytelling and characters in her writing.

It began, she says, on her last album, 2007's *The Book of Minerva*. But she's hit her stride on the new disc that, with justification, is being hailed as the best thing she's ever done. On it, we're introduced not just to the chilling story of Josephine and her killer but to that of sweet Anna May and Sad Willie Blue in the title track and, in *Shiloh*, that of Yates's father, who she met only when she was 40.

"Earlier in my career, I was mystified by story songs," says Yates, a Toronto-area native. "I thought only the masters could write them. With *Book of Minerva*, I felt, 'Wow! I've grown up: I can write story songs!'" She's also tickled at now writing songs from a male perspective, a skill she'd always marvelled at in other writers.

Along with grounding her new songs in concrete storylines and people, she enhances the realism by referencing real-life places. For example, in *Laugh Till We Cry*, a tune about her best friend who died suddenly, Yates mentions Indian Road in Toronto, where the two once lived in a rooming house. It's an evocative name for a road that, together with her description of life in the house, sparks immediate emotional and visual responses in the listener.

Another tune, the barroom rouser *Corktown*, paints vividly the rowdy tavern where Yates forged new musical relationships after moving to Hamilton from Toronto in 2002. As a bonus, the song features the Bad Girl Choir, a joyous-voiced group of Hamilton singers including Rita Chiarelli and Terra Lightfoot.

The album also spotlights Yates's flair for emotional eloquence. The lead track *See Who I Am*, for instance, shows that even when, like Yates, you're in your early 50s, the need to be recognized for who you really are persists undiminished.

And in *The Stray* she captures vividly the conflict between the hunger for attachment and the drive for independence. "*Baby, I'm ashamed the way you saw me that day / Like a little red fox, her paw wounded and caught / Fighting so hard to live, dying to be free,*" she sings.

The sharp self-awareness underpinning such songs no doubt springs in part from having worked through dark days. "I battled my own demons of addiction and stuff," she says. "I've been clean and sober about 22 years. I'm in a good place now."

That good place includes, on the new album, musical backing by the other members of Hey Stella! That's the roots quartet consisting of Yates, guitarist David Gavan Baxter, bassist Basil Donovan, and drummer Michelle Josef that was formed in the late 1990s. On the new



disc, they're tight and clean, with Yates's voice always in the fore.

Baxter also backed her on *The Book of Minerva* as well as during its promotional tour, and Donovan and Josef both contributed to that album.

An independent release, *Minerva* was Yates's first record since 1997's *Untogether* on Virgin Music Canada. Fans have been waiting since *Minerva* for something new.

"I didn't have an extra 10 grand to do it," she says about the lag between the last album and the new one. "Also, I wasn't sure what kind of record I wanted to make. I finally decided it had to be with a band but still sparse."

As well, she says, after *Minerva* the songwriting tap shut off. To earn money, she launched her popular Creative Genius Songwriting Workshops, mentoring other artists in songwriting, record-making and live performance. That turned the tap back on, she says.

"I got back to, 'This is not hard, and this is not precious. Just write the stupid song!'" By the time she was ready to make the new album, she had her pick of about 40 songs.

Those that made the cut included the

good-timing *Trouble in the Country*. It looks back to her late 1980s sojourn in Nashville after being signed by Sony Nashville. While there, she was introduced by an A&R man to the legendary producer Billy Sherrill, who died in 2015. "He's behind his desk and says (to the A&R man), 'So, who's this? Last week you brought me a stripper named Candy Cane. Who the hell is this?' He looks at me and goes, 'You're a redhead? There's only one redhead, and it's Reba (McEntire). What makes you think you're any good?' He was something. I knew I didn't want to work with this guy."

Decades later, she pillories both him and Nashville in *Trouble in the Country*. Revenge is indeed a dish best served cold.

When not writing, singing, or mentoring aspiring songwriters, Yates often wanders the old parts of Hamilton snapping photos with her iPhone 6. Her enticing pictures of decrepit motels, weathered signs and the like can be seen in exhibits and on her website ([www.lori Yates.com](http://www.lori Yates.com)). "I've always loved photojournalism," she says. "When I started looking at Hamilton through the lens of my phone, I thought, 'Oh my, this place is frozen in time. This is a

goldmine!'"

That last word can also serve as a pretty accurate description of Yates's music.



# Jason Wilson

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## Ben Caplan

**His latest offering of Gypsy, klezmer, and folk stretches beyond boundaries and genres.**

**By Pat Langston**

**B**en Caplan is being stared down as he drives.

The Halifax-based singer/songwriter is tooling around Belfast, making his way back to his hotel down a narrow road after sound check, and the occupant of the car in front of him seems to have a problem. Could be he's checking out Caplan's impressive beard, or maybe he's just unwilling to give way in this battle of the wills. As it stands, Caplan also doesn't want to back away from the standoff, and is greatly satisfied when the driver finally begrudgingly backs down the road, allowing Caplan to enter.

Fortunately, Caplan's driving habits don't spill over into his recording *modus operandi*. At least they don't anymore; while he admits to being a little combative when someone attempts to mess with his music and personal vision, with his latest album, *Birds With Broken Wings*, he allowed producer/rapper Socalled to challenge his idea of what a Ben Caplan album should sound like.

"I definitely struggled with the idea of letting someone else in," Caplan laughs over the phone, now pulled over to the side of the road so he can devote himself exclusively to the interview. "I mean, I really prefer to be in control, but when you bring in an outside producer to work with you it really doesn't make much sense to micromanage them."

You can see why he'd be hesitant to let go, though. Caplan has been carefully working out his always mutating Gypsy/klezmer/folk sound for a few years now, stretching it beyond genres and ignoring any promptings to settle it

into an identifiable musical style. His second full-length effort, 2011's *In the Time of the Great Remembering*, nabbed half a dozen Nova Scotia Music Awards nominations, at which point Caplan was a touring veteran, usually dragging along members of his band, the Casual Smokers, with him.

The East Coast Music Awards have taken notice as well, already bestowing Rising Star Recording of the Year on him in 2013, as well as nominating Caplan in 2016 for Album of the Year, Folk Recording of the Year, and Song of the Year. Little wonder that he's hesitant to allow very many outsiders into his musical sphere.

"Working with Socalled was wonderful, however," Caplan says. "We definitely argued with each other here and there, but that was kind of what I wanted. I had met with a few different people when I was putting together *Birds With Broken Wings*, and a lot of them had the attitude of, 'They're your songs, you



**"I really prefer to be in control, but when you bring in an outside producer to work with you it really doesn't make much sense to micromanage them."**

**— Ben Caplan**

they eventually took. Alas, it was not to be.

"We sort of figured everything out as we were going along. I wish there were alternate takes, but we didn't have time or budget for that. What happened was, if he felt strongly enough about his idea then we ended up doing it his way. We compromised with each other a lot, finding something that we were both happy with, but neither of us was willing to compromise on what we thought was good art. That's why I love the guy so much."

Except for a few weeks off here and there, Caplan has been on the road with varying numbers of Casual Smokers since *Birds With Broken Wings* was released in mid-September 2015. He's admittedly addicted to touring, and as he's quick to point out, live performances are where he really shines, whether as a duo with pianist/vocalist Taryn Kawaja or with a full rhythm section, which he was able to take with him for part of his European jaunt in the winter of 2015-16.

"It can be a struggle to bring a band," he admits, "and when I do it means I have to cut costs by tour managing myself, but it's worth it. I'd rather have an extra musician adding to the performance than someone to drive me around. The extra work load means that often it adds up to 18 hour days, but I can't complain. Hell, it's just nice to play music, you know?"

The long hours making sure everything runs smoothly might be tough, but at the moment Caplan is mostly concerned about the boxes of *Birds With Broken Wings* vinyl records that were seized at the German border on their current tour. He's not sure if he can arrange to have them released before they head back to North America, and is worried about fighting the extra shipping cost if he has to have them sent back after he heads for home. As with the problems of road managing his own tour, the irritation is smoothed over by the fact that in some ways this is just a reminder of how successful he's actually been.

"We sold out of the vinyl early on, so those boxes actually could have been used by us some time ago," he sighs. "Still, that means that people are buying the records, and that's not such a bad problem to have, is it?"

know best and I'll just do whatever you say'. Socalled was the only person willing to get into it with me and say, 'Well, I don't think you're judgment is correct on this, and I think I have a better idea'."

Caplan chuckles on recalling moments when the two clashed over arrangements and instrumentation while recording the album.

"I was convinced that one of the songs had a core melodic instrumental hook between verses that was not being captured in the arrangement. It bothered me, but then I understood over time that what I thought was a core was really a bed for something else. It was me being, 'Oh, nobody understands my vision, and this isn't right, and we're not going to get it right'. Now, when I listen back, I'm like, 'OK, I actually didn't get it'."

This makes one wonder whether the album has a batch of interesting outtakes, as Caplan and Socalled wrestled the songs into the forms

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## The Noisy Locomotive

**All the historical spirit of old-time traditional music resonates within this talented, fun duo.**

By Glen Hebert

**O**n the face of it, Ben Nesrallah is the height of improbability. He's 26 years old, has grown up in Montreal, and he plays old-time music in a duo with a friend he's had since childhood, Trevor Pool. Together they make up The Noisy Locomotive. Their latest release, *All Nature Soon Will Settle Down to Rest*, isn't just a lot of fun, it's also a quick, adept tour of the form and its history.

It's the tradition, more than anything, that Nesrallah and Pool seek to promote. And, as they make clear in their shows and their work in schools, it's truly one worth promoting, perhaps now more than ever.

Prior to the 1920s, there wasn't such a thing as old-time music, or at least it wasn't

called that. It was just called music. It came to America with the English, Scottish, Irish, and German settlers, and once in the new world, took off on its own. Over time, it continued to change and evolve, creating a number of variant styles throughout Appalachia. In time, musical styles across the eastern United States were as unique and clustered as English accents are even today. You could tell, within a few miles at times, where a player was from just by hearing them play.

Through the 20th century the sound of old-time music became more homogenous. So much so that these days, wherever you go—Tulsa to Tokyo, San Diego to St. Louis—the old-time style that you are most likely to hear is the Round Peak style, a highly influential music that comes from Surry County, North Carolina. Surry County is, um, small. Round Peak—the town that gives its name to the style—is even smaller still. But, if we wanted to stretch a point, we could say that for much of the 20th century, the epicentre of the Round Peak style was even more exact than that: Tom-

my Jarrell's house, a small, white clapboard bungalow in Toast, NC, a town just west of Mount Airy. Jarrell was a great teacher, a lively personality, and a magnet for young players who wanted to learn old-time music. Some, such as Mike Seeger and Bob Carlin, made the drive down from New York City; others, such as Riley Baugus and David Holt, arrived from within Appalachia. But they came in the hundreds for the same reason: to sit at the feet of the master.

There are lots of indirect descendants, too, and Nesrallah and Pool are terrific examples of that. They play lots of classic tunes, including *Jimmie Brown the Newsboy* and *Lulu Walls* and they remain close to the traditional style. Fiddle often is forward in the mix, we might say these days, taking the melody and embellishing it through bow work and all those beautiful drones. The banjo is played claw hammer, and supports the syncopation of the fiddle melody. In much old-time music, guitar is relegated to a back seat, providing rhythm for the fiddle and banjo. Here, that's what it does for the most





part, providing the accompaniment to the fiddle and mandolin.

"It's music at a human level," says Dan. "We're all just so plugged in these days, in our own little worlds. The idea of sharing music by actually sitting down and playing with each other and learning from each other, it's kind of a lost art form."

"You can sit in a circle with a bunch of folks here, and I like that it's not about ego or one person over another. It's about sharing and having a good time and building something together. It has a lot to do with the idea that it's not about the individual, it's about the community, building a sound, and being in the moment."

For many people, particularly in Ottawa and Montreal where Nesrallah and Pool come from and play, it can take some getting used to. Old-time music is social music, meant for dancers to dance to—and for players to participate in—more than it is to be sat in front of and listened to. It's about being together, not showing off. While instruments will take turns with the melody, they don't solo in the way that bluegrass,

blues, and jazz musicians do. Instead, they play the melody straight, pretty much, which can make the music sound repetitive (and, well, it is).

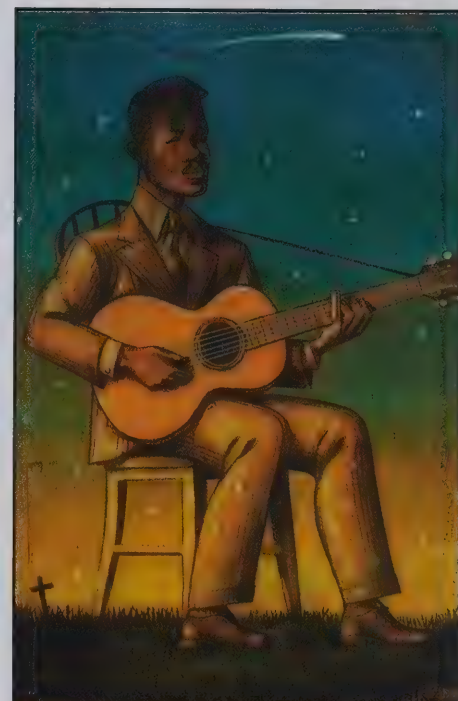
What's also wonderful about the music (and I realize that this might take a bit of a leap of imagination for the uninitiated) is the subtlety. Slight variations have meaning. Sometimes, delightfully so. *Jimmy Brown the Newsboy* certainly has a home within old-time music, though we know it today perhaps largely because the Carter Family had a hit with it in 1931. On the recording by The Noisy Locomotive the mandolin intro and turnarounds—the bars that Earl Scruggs added to the arrangement—quote another Carter tune, *You Are My Flower*. (There are five Carter songs on The Noisy Locomotive's latest disc, *All Nature Soon Will Settle Down To Rest*. Can you spot them all?)

It's delightful to have those kinds of nods and winks. For many people, these songs aren't just songs, they're like favourite bedtime stories, full of drama, history, interesting turns, and familiar faces. Tommy, Earl, Maybelle, AP, Charlie, Mac, and Bill. (And look, there's good old Jimmy Brown, still not wearing any shoes!) This is music that comes to us through various filters, voices, and years. Like the steps of the Agora, they've been shaped and burnished over the years by all the people they have supported. Even if you don't know all the details, you still can have a sense that a lot of people have been here before, and there are hints of all lives that these songs have touched.

Those kinds of historical details, or whatever they are, aren't essential though they can add some of the charm. When used best, of course, the songs aren't presented for the nostalgia, but in order to say something new. "We're bringing in old songs for a reason," says Dan. "They're songs that happen to be resonating with us at a certain point in time." No, you can't buy a table for 15 cents, as in the lyric of *Stern Old Bachelor*. For that matter, bachelor probably doesn't mean the same thing it did in the '30s, when the Carter's recorded it (at a time when AP and Sara were estranged, still singing together even when they couldn't speak to each other anymore).

But the messages are larger than the details. The music is about austerity, disappointment and, as Dan says, "the struggles and the grief and the good times, too."

"Old-time and the old country tunes, it's just a style of music that resonates within us. And with any traditional genre, it's got that soul in it," he says, then adds with a chuckle, "And, hey, it's just a lot of fun."



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## The Small Glories

**This Winnipeg duo's stunning debut proves an accomplished blend of two distinct talents.**

**By Eric Volmers**

**N**ear the end of the Small Glories' first full-length album, *Wondrous Traveller*, there is a playful take on the Billy Bragg and Wilco tune *Way Over Yonder in the Minor Key*, a song that came from cobbling together old Woody Guthrie lyrics with new music for the 1998 tribute record *Mermaid Avenue*.

Actually, playful doesn't really do it justice. In the hands of the Small Glories, *Way Over Yonder* goes from wistful, nostalgic ballad to a

rollicking singalong that makes perfect use of the combined vocal prowess of folk musicians Cara Luft and JD Edwards.

On record, it seems almost off-the-cuff, with laughter and hand claps mixed in with the seamless interplay between the two vocalists. It all sounds so natural and joyous that it's hard to fathom how this musical partnership could only be two years old. It's like the climax of an old-school kitchen party, sung by life-long friends.

"When we recorded that one, it was all about that," confirms Edwards, on the line from Winnipeg, where the Small Glories were busy rehearsing for an upcoming CD release show in their home town. "I might have been a little drunk, I'm not sure."

Still, as Luft later reveals, getting there wasn't quite the night of revelry that the end results suggest. In the studio, she said she sug-

gested, ironically enough, that the song's key be tweaked to make it a more comfortable fit with her range. The album's producer, 54-40's Neil Osborne, wouldn't allow it.

"Neil said, 'You have to sing it in this key, this is the key of the song,'" says Luft. "He was right. In the other key, it lost energy and the vocal sweet spot just wasn't quite there. So I remember during the recording there was quite a few times where I had to go hide by myself and tell myself that I can actually sing these parts. Because it was much beyond what I had ever done before. It was pushing my vocal boundaries and limits and discovering that, wow, I really can do this."

"It just took me nearly 40 years to clue into it," she adds.

As much as the Small Glories seem fuelled by the easy interplay between Luft and Edwards—a joint interview with the pair involves lots of laughter, joking, and finishing of each other's sentences—both acknowledge that the initial thrust was to find a way to challenge themselves after spending years in the trenches of the Western Canadian music scene in separate careers.

Luft, a co-founder and former member of Juno-winners The Wailin' Jennys, has been performing since she was a child growing up surrounded by folk music in Calgary. Oshawa-born Edwards has been a mainstay of Winnipeg's music scene for years, fronting the country-blues flavoured JD Edwards Band. In October 2012, the two played together for the first time during the 25th anniversary celebrations at Winnipeg's West End Cultural Centre.

It was an evening that featured the city's top musicians being randomly ("or maybe not so randomly," Edwards now suspects) put together to cover the music of fellow Winnipeggers. The chemistry was immediate. So a few months later, Luft took Edwards along for some European and North American solo dates she needed to wrap up. When she learned she had won some free recording time at an analogue studio in Kelowna, the Small Glories officially became a musical partnership.

"We had fans coming up to us—people who had seen me out West ever since I had started playing," says Luft. "For 20 years, they had seen all my formations: they've seen Cara solo, they've seen me with Hugh MacMillan, they've seen me with the Jennys. You name it, they've seen it. Then they saw me with JD and a bunch of them came up to me, put their hands on my shoulder, and said: 'Cara, this is the best formation we've ever seen you in.'"

"And then they said—which is always what you want to hear as an artist—'And, you can make money doing this.'"



Last summer, a self-titled EP, also recorded during those Kelowna sessions, was quietly released on the duo's website. In mid-February, they released *Wondrous Traveller*, the band's first full-length and a stunning, fully accomplished blend of two distinct talents. While there is no shortage of instrumental prowess on display, including generous helpings of Luft's clawhammer banjo, it's hardly surprising that much of the focus is on the vocals. From the expert harmonies that underscore Edwards's bluesy, road-weary *Had I Paid* to the rising, multiple-voiced chorus of the gorgeous ballad *Home*, Luft and Edwards combine memorable melodies with lyrics that convey the hard-fought wisdom of the travelling musician.

They also trade lead and harmony vocals throughout, often in the same song. Edwards takes over the lead on *Something To Hold Onto*, which is actually one of Luft's old Wailin' Jennys songs. Luft's rich alto kicks off the title track, which combines two traditional songs, *What Wondrous Love* and *The Traveller*. Both are examples of shape-note or sacred-harp singing, religious songs that come from what is considered the oldest form of written music in North America.

That musical practice, which dates back to the 18th-century colonial music schools in the U.S.,

represents a rare overlap in the musical coming-of-age of Luft and Edwards.

"Both JD and I grew up going to church and a lot of our singing experiences come from a church background," Luft says. "We heard this sacred-harp stuff and thought it was gorgeous and beautiful. Regardless of the religious affiliation, it was just really beautiful music."

But, for the most part, the two singers seemed to have taken very different paths when it came to musical maturation. Luft is the daughter of professional folk musicians Barry and Lyn. While she was growing up, travelling folkies would be billeted at the family home in Calgary and Cara began performing with her parents at a young age.

Edwards, on the other hand, studied trombone in university and was a kilt-wearing member of Queens's famous marching band before dropping out to play rock'n'roll.

But while the two may have very different musical histories, they both felt they were at a crossroads in their respective careers when *Small Glories* began to take shape.

"As artists, it's good to explore the world," says Edwards. "For us, it's exploring music and exploring lyrics and performing."

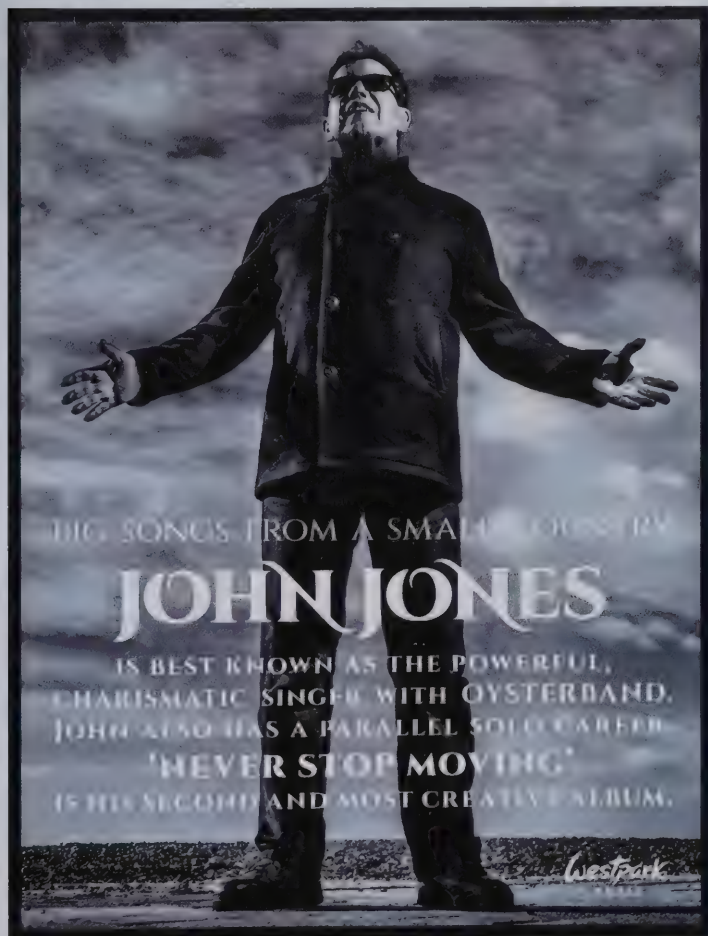
"I think because we're older..." Luft begins.

"Well, Cara's old," Edwards clarifies. "She's



waaay older."

"I'm waaay older," she adds with a laugh. "But there's just a different perspective when you are not in your 20s or early 30s anymore and you're still a musician. I think there's a little less ego involved and a willingness to look at the art form and say, 'Yeah, I want to become a stronger singer. I want to become a better performer. I want to hone my craft'. What I found is when I started singing with JD, I was really challenged as a singer. Singing with JD pushed me even farther and I was ready to be pushed farther."







## Yann Falquet & Pascal Gemme

**Erstwhile members of Genticorum reinvent themselves with impressive trad' themes.**

**By Yves Bernard**

**W**ith Genticorum, singer-guitarist Yann Falquet and fiddler-foot-tapper, Pascal Gemme toured the world refining their classic crooked tunes and call-and-response songs as a way of drawing attention to their roots. As a duo, they've just released *Princes et habitants*, a lovely album of folk songs and stripped down traditional music gently paced to allow the music to breathe and reveal all of its poetic nuances.

"In the beginning, I wanted it to be Yann's album and his super song arrangements", says Pascal. "I wanted to be the one who brought

his project to the light. That's where I began. And I found violin parts to accompany him. But Yann didn't want it to be his album".

As a duo, they had played a few gigs and the experience turned out to be decisive: "I had brought in a few pieces that I had been working on over the last two years. I started to do more song researching for myself and was going to the archives. I received a grant and started putting more time into it. I was able to build a repertoire", Yann explains.

Before Genticorum formed in 2000, the two were already playing as a duo busking on the sidewalks of Saint Denis Street in Montreal. If they remember correctly, the adventure lasted one or two summers, and the two rascals played violin tunes together. At the time Entreloupe's *Saint-Bertrand* and La Bottine Souriante's *La traverse de l'Atlantique* were great sources of inspiration for them.

Pascal got his taste for the violin from his family and started playing at a very young

age. His family would mix everything that one could find in the Huntingdon region of Montérégie: Irish and Scottish tunes, American tunes, some quadrilles and even popular songs. This was very different than Yann, who didn't come from a traditional music family. He started off playing the clarinet in the school band before choosing the guitar, studying jazz and then discovering trad.

Accompaniment is his art, and he explores many open chords: "The moment it clicked for me with traditional music was when I met Peter Senn, an Irish session musician who played practically every night. I discovered that accompaniment came with a language: an open tuning in "DADGAD". After having gone through jazz training, it was completely refreshing to be a beginner again. As an accompanying musician, you have the power to bring different colours to things, without being responsible for what's going on".

As for Pascal the fiddler, he can play tradi-



tionally, but can also integrate various other elements. One sometimes has the impression that his bow is floating in the air, but he's also able to adapt to pieces with progressive tendencies, as he's done in *Genticorum*: "It's true, but I think that it's the same thing for Yann. We bring together all of the different types of music that we've listened to, but always remain respectful toward traditional music. I've played rock, heavy metal, prog', and in *Genticorum*, we have no qualms about bringing in all kinds of colours. Then there's the fiddler's style that I like a lot. I have sounds that I've borrowed from other sources, for example, ornaments that are more Irish and bowing that's a bit old-timey", Pascal explains. Louis "Pitou" Boudreault, Aimé Gagnon, André Alain and Jos Bouchard are among the fiddlers that have influenced him the most.

*Princes et habitants* includes both Pascal's fiddle repertoire and Yann's songs: "When I received my grant, I was looking for songs that I could play solo, a bit more like a folksinger than a call-and-responses singer", he says. "I worked with Ryan McGiver, who comes from a more Irish folk scene, and that influenced me a lot. I then brought songs to Pascal that weren't necessarily call-and-responses songs". Sometimes, like in *Petit Jean pastouriau*, it's the guitar and violin that are responding, whereas in *Les Habitants de Montréal*, the traditional structure has been slowed down and surrealistic lyrics added: "The inhabitants of Montreal are getting a building made. It's to go play in. The hull of the building is the roof of Saint-Jean church. The building's three masts are the chimneys that blow smoke into the wind."

And where do the princes in the album's title come from? "*Le Prince d'Orange* comes from Marius Barbeau's repertoire and *Prince Eusèbe* is a song that Michel Faubert released", answers Yann. "These songs have always fascinated me because they have a bit of a medieval European feel. They talk about princes, and there are no princes in Quebec. It's kind of in the spirit of the old English ballads that really affected me". Pascal confirms this by citing Martin Carthy and Dave Swarbrick: "Their's is a model that greatly influenced the approach taken on this album", he says.

For the songs, Yann composed instrumental parts to go with "super melodies and impressive themes", as Pascal put it. As for instrumental pieces, the duo covered a tune by the late Franco-American fiddler Wilson Langlois, a set of grondeuse reels, an intimate composition by their friend Jason Rosenblatte and a suite of tunes by Hermas Rehal of Gaspésie and Ira Leblanc of New Brunswick, courtesy of folklorist Devon Léger. There is also a passage dedicated to Antoine Gauthier, who wrote both a cotillion and a galop: "When I was young, I hated the quadrille repertoire, but I've been playing them a lot for the past seven or eight years", confesses Pascal with a laugh.

And the album ends with collaborations from, among others, Jason Rosenblatt, Marc Maziade, Laura Risk and Nathalie Haas. A nice family reunion.



Pascal Gemme & Yann Faldut

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## Anne Briggs

### An exclusive interview with the voice that inspired the likes of June Tabor and Sandy Denny. By Ken Hunt

Scotland's western coast is the region where Anne Briggs has lived for many years. It is an area swept by rain-laden Atlantic winds and gale-force storms. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty and biodiversity. That might be the nearby sea loch with its colony of protected native oysters or two types of temperate rainforest known as Atlantic oakwoods and hazelwoods. The mental image probably conjured is somewhat misleading, given that many of those specific ecosystems have other species such as Scots pines, specimen ashes festooned with mosses, lichens, and ferns, and ancient wych-elms. Ayrshire is a place as if fashioned by nature especially for the woman, of whom Sandy Denny sang: "Annie wanders on the land / She loves the freedom of the air..." in *The Pond and the Stream* on Fotheringay's debut album.

Born Anne Patricia Briggs in Nottinghamshire in September 1944, from infancy she was raised by her father Albert's sister, Hilda, and her husband, Bill Curtis. Her aunt, Beryl, would marry Norman Lewis, a noted conservationist and lifelong non-musical influence. The countryside fed her imagination. She is Britain's folk revival singer who has lived closer to nature in the raw than any other. In four decades of us talking not a single conversation has passed without referring to natural history, horticulture, the landscape, or environmental matters.

How would she say the land has fed her intellectually overall? "That's very difficult to answer," she hesitates, talking exclusively to *Penguin Eggs*. "It's probably had a greater input when I think about it than anything else. I have and do read a lot, listen to music, of course, think a lot, but probably the most stimulating thing for me is actually the countryside, the landscape and everything that constitutes the landscape—the geology, the wildlife, the waters. That's probably been more stimulating and thought-provoking for me more than the other, more obvious stimulating, intellectual pursuits if you like."

For Record Store Day in April 2014—and to mark 50 years passing since its original release—Topic, an active participant in the U.K. events, reissued her debut vinyl EP, *The Hazards of Love*. The centre of both the original and facsimile state, "First published 1963"—however all contemporaneous indications point to its appearance in 1964, due to Topic's straitened financial circumstances. The validation of a solo EP was incalculable for a folk act then. *Hazards* remains one of the enduring splendours of the Folk Revival. It was also one of the major catalysts for June Tabor singing English folksongs; she learned, by rote, its every nuance, ornamentation, and figurative breath. Incidentally, Topic's *Anne Briggs – A Collection* CD is one of the soundest investments in English folk music that can be recommended. Probably any British singer worth her or his salt singing, for example, *The Recruited Collier* or *The Snow It Melts The Soonest* will know that behind them stands the benchmark singer, Anne Briggs.

I am of the generation who bought that Topic EP the first time round, saw her performing in her glory during the late 1960s in her prime, and caught one truly hairs-raised-on-the-back-of-the-neck folk club performance in March 1991 on what fools wrote off as an inconsistent come-back tour. The keynote characteristic about her voice was there was nothing in her delivery to distract from the song. She reconnected traditional song—whether *The Recruited Collier*, *Blackwater Side* (lighting the powder trail to Led Zeppelin's *Black Mountain Side*) or *Young Tambling*—with their primary purpose and *raison d'être*. Namely, that of storytelling. Her own songs went places, too. *The Time Has Come*, the title track of her second LP, was covered by, among others, Alan Price, Dorris Henderson, and Pentangle while Robert Plant sang her *Go Your Way* from her 1971 self-titled debut solo LP at the Royal Festival Hall's *A Celebration of Bert Jansch* on Dec. 3, 2013—televised the following March as *The Genius of Bert Jansch – Folk, Blues and Beyond*.

A stranger to stagecraft and artifice, historically when introducing a song she rarely bothered to pad out an introduction, sticking to the song's title, its source and mentioning the folklorist and folksinger Bert Lloyd (1908-1982), should it be a morsel, say, *Young Tambling*, he had fed her. With next to no stage patter or padding and with most songs lasting between under two and under four minutes, she burned through repertoire in live performance.

Walking the Staffordshire hills in 2007, we took a break at a pub in Longnor. "I always

Photo: Courtesy of Topic Records

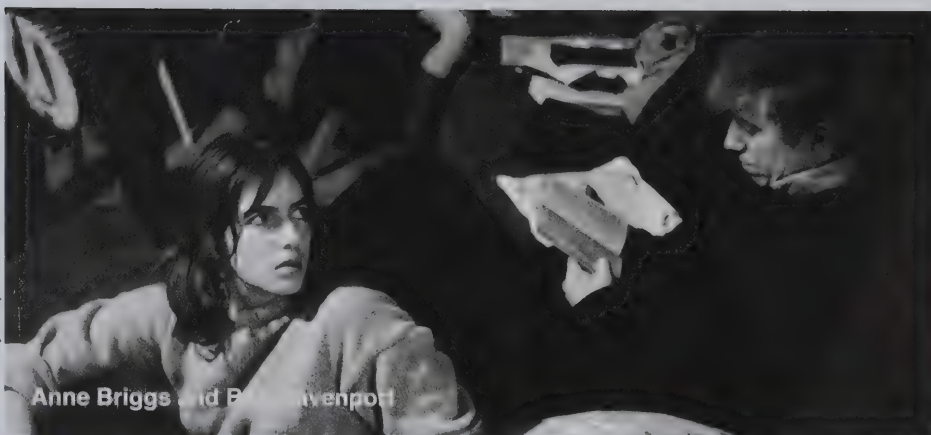


was uncomfortable appearing in front of people,” she admitted. “People would ask, ‘Why do you sing with your eyes shut?’ The reason I do it is because I was, am, so embarrassed and shy being onstage. I don’t have to see the people looking at me while I sing. Or perform. It allows me to really get into the song. I cut myself off—not from the audience spiritually in that I feel I wouldn’t be up there singing these 30-verse ballads or whatever it is I’m doing if I didn’t believe it was as potentially pertinent or relevant to them in their lives as it was to me in mine. But shutting my eyes at least allowed me to cut out the whole business of the stage and the theatre.”

Too tense to talk, too wrapped up in the song about to be sung, she could be famously skit-fish. Richard Thompson drew on her in part in *Beeswing* heard in “*She was a lost child / Oh, she was running wild...*”. Her reputation for nonconformity or wildness somehow morphed into all manner of myth that continues to be regurgitated. Arguably however, the adjective most commonly tagged to her name is reclusive. Actually, private is more apposite. When it comes to her music, intense should be my word of choice.

On Jan. 31, 2016, at Celtic Connections she made an extremely rare, scheduled appearance.

Photo: Courtesy of Topic Records



After a screening of Jan Leman’s Bert Jansch documentary *Acoustic Routes*, in which she features, she talked in public. “They were a brilliant audience and, interesting, a mixed range of ages. There were people of my own generation right down to twenty-something people. Clearly they were all rooting for Bert Jansch. It was complete ad lib. Nothing was prepared. Pete Paphides must have had some idea of the questions he wanted to ask, but we just followed each other through it, really. It flowed really, really well. Because it was completely unprepared it was really fresh. They responded incredibly well to it. I made

comments and various observations.

“D’you know what I did? I can’t remember doing this before. I was actually looking back at the audience, which was something I could never, ever do! Ranging across the audience with my eyes. Normally when I introduced a song, if I had the confidence or courage to introduce it at a gig, I’d stare down at the floor or, if I’d got one, at the guitar or the bouzouki and mumble something as short as possible to get it over with before launching into the song. The song would say it all for me. Pete did draw me out a bit. Which was unusual.”

## “WONDROUS TRAVELER”

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## Ben Miller & Anita MacDonald

### Traditional Cape Breton fiddle and pipe dance tunes and Gaelic songs inspire this gifted duo. By Tim Readman

**T**wo of the brightest young things in Gaelic traditional music are hectically touring across the U.S.A; but fear not, gentle reader, *Penguin Eggs* has tracked them down for an interview—thanks to in-car Bluetooth technology. Allow me to introduce fiddler and Gaelic singer Anita MacDonald, who was born and raised on Cape Breton Island and has a very musical family.

“They encouraged me to start in on step dancing when I was four. My mom started teaching me in the kitchen. Then I got my first fiddle from Santa. My grandpa was a well known fiddler and he gave me lessons, then I got a few private lessons after that.”

Alongside her is piper Ben Miller, who hails from New York State. “I started piping when I was seven years old. My father’s side are a Scottish family from New Brunswick and my mother’s are Irish from the northern part of New York State but neither one of them had a strong connection to traditional music. It just happened there were six pipe bands within a 10-mile radius of where I grew up. I started playing in the pipe band competitive scene. When I was around 11 or 12, I was exposed to the small pipes and the border pipes and gradually shifted my focus there. Along with that I discovered the music of Cape Breton and the west coast of Scotland and moved away from the competition music and focused on dance music—the music we are playing now.”

The tale of their first meeting is auspicious as Anita recounts. “We actually met at the 2013 Celtic Colours Festival in Cape Breton, in the green room at the festival club. I asked him where the beer was and that’s how we met! Shortly after that, I invited him onstage with

me—and that was when we played our first set of tunes together.”

Ben picks up the story: “We hadn’t played a single note of music together until we got on the stage...everything just clicked into place, and a month after that Anita invited me on a tour in Ontario. Then I invited her to play on an EP that I was recording. That was what launched what we are doing now.”

I wonder out loud if Anita had any reservations about asking him to play—in case he was a terrible piper—and she is quick to respond. “Oh, he’s really good looking and we were drinking beer when I asked him to go onstage with us...”

Given the fact they both took up traditional music at a young age, I ask how their friends responded and if they’d been teased at all. Ben jumps in. “For me, being a young kid in northern New York State, I probably had a bit more of a hard time with it than Anita growing up in Cape Breton. My best friends poked fun at me a bit...but I was in a youth band and everyone



was under 18, so I was surrounded by other young people playing traditional music.”

Anita’s experience was a little different. “The school I went to was in a culture-heavy area, so a lot of the people I went to school with took traditional music lessons. There was a really strong group on the island—we all grew up together playing that music, so it was accepted.”

The conversation turns to musicians who have inspired their individual and collective playing. “I have always been inspired by fiddle players,” Ben declares. “Andrea Beaton has always been a huge influence. She’s got a very old-sounding style and I think I can hear a lot of pipes in her fiddle playing. I am always trying to work out in my head how to make those sounds with my piping. That’s what makes our sound when we play together—we are trying to make one sound out of it.

“I think everybody playing music from Cape Breton has been influenced by Ashley MacIsaac. He’s just tremendous—one of the best traditional players out there for a dance living right now.”

Anita agrees. “Yes, I was influenced by lots of local fiddle players. We are trying to focus on the dance traditions and their rhythms. It comes from growing up listening to that. Also the pipes are coming back really strong in Cape

Breton, especially at dances.”

As for their new release, *A Day at the Lake*, Ben explains how it was the culmination of their flourishing relationship. “Everything since we met led to the point when we recorded the CD at this big, beautiful house in New York. We brought in musicians from both of our backgrounds. Bringing all those people together at that place was very special for us. The CD’s been really successful. It’s been a surprise how it’s taken off.”

As well as fiddling up a storm, Anita also sings beautifully. “I took Gaelic in school and again at university. Our music is based on the Gaelic traditional so we try to pick songs that have a connection with the Island. One of the songs on the new album was got from a fellow in Little Narrows where I grew up. The other we found on an archival recording. We are trying to do older stuff that was once sung around Cape Breton and was popular back then.”

We finish our chat with a look into the future for this dynamic duo and their bandmates. “We released *A Day at the Lake* in August and it’s been non-stop since then. We just found out it’s been nominated for an East Coast Music Award so that’s been huge for us. We’ve already done a tour of Scotland and the west coast of the States and we’ve lined up a whole lot more.”



There are also rumours of a big Northern European festival as well as a plan to tour on the west coast of Scotland, England and Ireland. Ben waxes enthusiastically about those prospects. “We are doing a big U.K. release. We are excited about taking it to continental Europe for the first time. Maybe we’ll do a live album next.”

So for Ben Miller and Anita MacDonald, the possibilities are simply endless, no matter which of them is navigating, and who is in the driver’s seat.

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# Folk Blues & Beyond



**Young, gifted and assuredly talented, Kacy Anderson and Clayton Linthicum craft exquisite, occasionally dark, gripping recordings inspired by traditional folk songs and vintage country blues. Words by Roddy Campbell.**



**T**hey sit in a car park on the edge of Regina: Kacy, 19, all giggles and feigned disinterest, and Clayton, 22, country gentleman-courteous and insatiable musical maven. These second cousins from the badlands around Glentworth, SK, are on their way to the Festival du Voyageur in Winnipeg, MB. But before they head out onto the Trans-Canada Highway on a fine February afternoon, there are a few niceties to deliberate upon: murder, infanticide, that kind of thing.

They do enjoy a good grisly folk ballad, Kacy Anderson and Clayton Linthicum. Of course, they blame their infatuation on that exceptionally talented man, Ryan Boldt of The Deep Dark Woods, who introduced them to the recordings of his good friend Shirley Collins and other galvanizing figures from the '60s and '70s British folk scene.

Incidentally, they recently joined Boldt in his new band Yarrow (as in the Child Ballad, *The Dowie Dens O' Yarrow*). That promising new venture we'll get around to eventually, but first there's the pressing matter of a new Kacy & Clayton album, *Strange Country*—an incredible, intoxicating collection of often dark, gripping, original material seamlessly interwoven with a sea shanty and two traditional songs from such stellar sources as Shirley Collins and the duo of Doc Watson and Jean Richie. And if it doesn't win Traditional Album of the Year at the next Canadian Folk Music Awards, I'll eat my hat. Heck, I'll eat Jory Nash's hats—all of them.

As young as they surely are, the title of their song *Dyin' Bed Maker* alone provides a clear sense of how deep a well from which their traditional-soaked muse surfaces.

The title, of course, grew out of Charley Patton's country blues classic *Jesus Is A Dying Bed Maker*. But in the bold, resourceful, secular hands of Kacy & Clayton, a jealous woman murders her rival as she lies in bed.

"I wrote it originally as a fiddle tune. And then it took a darker twist," chuckles Kacy. "I don't want to get into too many details. It's a pretty gruesome song but I guess it's about murdering an adulteress."

*Brunswick Stew* increases the body count by one unwanted child. It's an impressive reworking of an old familiar traditional tale of parents of a certain social standing discovering an unmarried daughter's pregnancy and coercing her into drowning the baby.

"We wrote the baby-killing thing together," says Kacy. "We just knew someone who had a similar story—the concealing of a pregnancy—that we based it off. Her story wasn't quite so

gruesome. We added that ourselves.

"I think we both just really like good old stories—somebody usually died or some terrible twisted thing happened, especially in *Brunswick Stew*—some baby killing, just gnarly, terrible things—which make these stories really interesting."

A classically trained vocalist up to the age of 12, Kacy's a remarkable, intuitive singer with an economic delivery that effortlessly expands in strength and scope as required. Just listen to her swoop and soar on the traditional sea shanty *The Plains of Mexico (Santiana)* or on their *Down At The Dancehall*, a spry two-step with a twist. There's always a twist.

"That one's about being a freak in a small town, and nobody really liking you because your clothes aren't the kind of clothes they like on a woman," giggles Kacy. "It's kinda like a shy girl who's not really interested in anyone but lots of people are interested in her."

Instrumentally, *Dancehall* offers a lively change in form. Besides Clayton's melodeon, Kacy's fiddle makes a first appearance.

"I like to tell people I've been playing for a couple of months but probably around three years," she says. "I played when I was younger, too, with my grandpa, but never really pursued it. [But] I was having a jam with my grandparents, and I was playing an old song and was having quite a bit of fun so I decided to take a couple of lessons. I'd like to get a lot better than I am but I just haven't had a lot of time to practice."

While Kacy plays the fiddle and 12-string guitar, Clayton provides the majority of the instrumental muscle on a variety of electric, steel, acoustic six and 12-string guitars as well as the banjo, mandolin, melodeon, and autoharp. Clearly he has a voracious appetite for all forms of roots music, which he joyfully adapts accordingly. Take the aforementioned *Brunswick Stew*, for instance.

Clayton: "Davy Graham's first album, *The Guitar Player* (1963), it's called. Are you familiar with that one?"

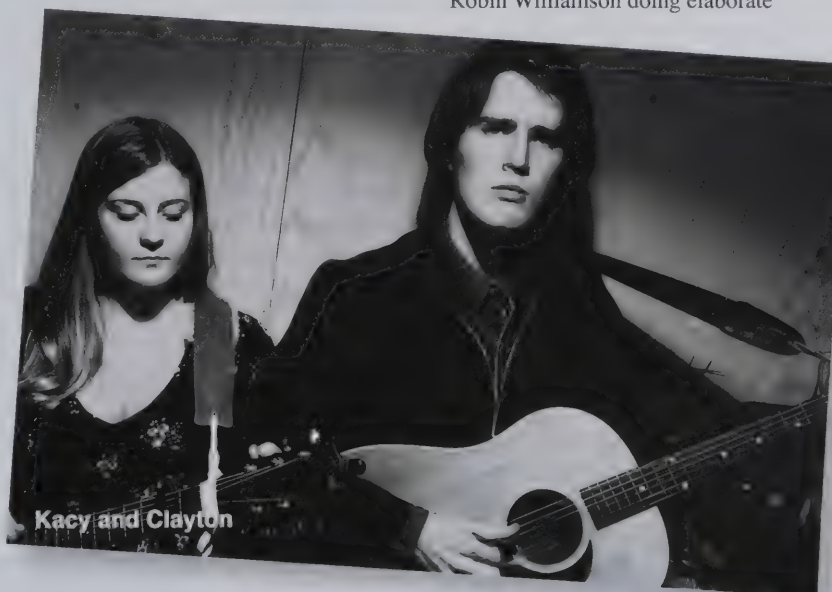
"Ah, yes Clayton, I am."

"I think it's mostly Davy on guitar and I think maybe a drummer—I really liked the style of that—tom-tom heavy; I'm a big fan of the tom-tom. We got our dear friend Lucas Goetz from The Deep Dark Woods to try and play in that style. He used mallets. It was a lot of fun recording that one."

They kicked up their heels on the traditional *Seven Yellow Gypsies*, too, apparently.

"I've always liked that song but there's lots of different variations. The one that we got the melody from was the Shirley Collins's version with the Incredible String Band. It was Shirley Collins, with Mike Heron and

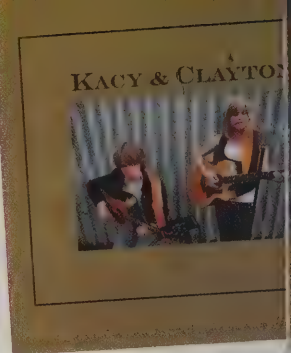
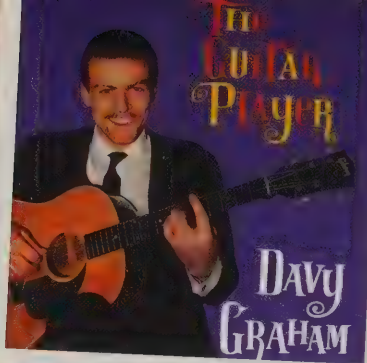
Robin Williamson doing elaborate







Ryan Bold



old and so strong. I just find a lot of power in those old folk songs, especially the language. It's always very simple and always precise. That's what drew me in."

Kacy: "They are such good-quality songs. They've had a lot of time for the bad [elements] to be strained out. All the hard parts of writing a song disappear and you can focus more on arrangements. It's just how you want to portray the song to other people, because you may hear it in a different way from someone else. You want to add a different aspect to it. Our taste in traditional songs carries through into our songwriting."

And how do they know when they've written a good song?

"When Clayton says that it is a good song, usually. I try and not get too confident before Clayton gives it a check mark. We write parts of songs and bring them to each other and try and collaborate on them. It's only the two of us. Usually there's a 100-per-cent response from me."

Clayton: "We trust each other's opinions and taste. So if one of us shows an idea to the other and the other one likes it enough to pursue it I think that's enough confirmation to keep working on it."

Kacy and Clayton grew up on cattle ranches around Glentworth—70 kilometres northwest of the U.S. border crossing at West Poplar and 184 kilometres southwest of Moose Jaw—in an area their great-grandfather first settled after moving from North Dakota to raise 12 kids.

She comes from a strong musical background. Her mom's a fine singer, as are her three sisters. Until the age of 12, Kacy took classical singing lessons. She formed her first duo with her grandpa, Carl Anderson, to perform around the local community. Carl played polkas on his accordion and she accompanied him on the fiddle and sang covers by Dolly Parton and Loretta Lynn.

Clayton's mom sang, too. And he shared musical grandparents with Kacy. He had taken piano lessons from an early age but that wore thin. He wanted a guitar. Finally his parents relented when he was eight and his uncle taught him rudimentary chords.

A life-long admirer of Bob Dylan, Clayton spent much of his computer labs at school tracing Dylan's roots back to country bluesmen such

hand clapping. So I thought we'd try that Davy Graham drum style again. Luke also used mallets on that one."

All of which raises the million-dollar question: what attracted them to these traditional folk songs in the first place?

Clayton: "They just seem so validated because they are so

as Jesse Fuller and Blind Lemon Jefferson. And when he turned 15, his parents took him to Memphis, where he bought albums by Mississippi John Hurt, Bukka White, and *The Roots of Bob Dylan* compilation, which featured many of the acoustic blues greats the likes of Lonnie Johnson, Lightnin' Hopkins, and Big Bill Broonzy.

About the same time, Clayton took fingerpicking lessons from Bob Evans, a former member of Saskatchewan country-folk pioneers (Humphrey and) The Dumptrucks. He had also recorded tracks for Stefan Grossman's prestigious Kicking Mule Records on the albums *Novelty Guitar Instrumentals* (1975) and *The Entertainer – Classic Rags of Scott Joplin Arranged for the Six String Guitar* (1975). Evans subsequently introduced his pupil to the recordings of Bert Jansch, Davy Graham, and John Renbourn. So young master Clayton was in exceptional hands.

Just as well. Neither he nor Kacy fancied cattle ranching. Instead, they spent hours in each other's basements making music. Then in 2009, she talked him into playing guitar for her at a Johnny Cash tribute at nearby Mankota Community Hall.

"Right after that we thought, 'Well, maybe we can get a gig over at the Wood Mountain bar and they can pay us in chicken fingers'," says Clayton.

They did just that and eventually the duo started performing in Regina and Saskatoon.

"It gradually turned into something we thought we'd might want to do for more than a year or two," says Kacy.

In 2011, Kacy, then 14, and Clayton, 17, released their self-titled debut album—a disc compiled largely of acoustic country blues and British traditional folk songs. Count a notable take on *Matty Groves* among them. But Kacy & Clayton also includes two impressive original tracks: a harrowing account of the bloody American Civil War battle on *Shiloh's Hill*, played out on a mandolin and clawhammer banjo, and the equally impressive hobo's lament, *Careless Love*. Not to over-elaborate, but we here at *Penguin Eggs* were absolutely astounded. As our Doug Swanson wrote at the time, "The maturity and sophistication on [this] disc is astonishing [see issue No. 57]". It was certainly a harbinger of things to come.

**O**ddly enough, neither of them look back on that album fondly.

Kacy: "The first one is so outdated that we don't tell anyone about it. I was kind of embarrassed about it. I was pretty young and my voice has changed a lot. It's funny listening back to it now. I sound like a little kid that's singing too low for their voice. I think Clayton played too many blues licks. But I think it set us on the right path."

Clayton: "I look back on it and think, 'Have I gotten worse? Or do I play less notes now?' I think I play less, which I'm pleased about. At the time, I hadn't developed the notion of only playing what you need to play, which I feel I have a good handle on now. That's what I think about when I hear that album. I have about 75 copies of it in my mom's sewing





Country life: Clayton and Kacy

room at home.”

Whatever, nobody’s arguing about *The Day Is Past & Gone* (2013), an exquisite album produced by Ryan Boldt of The Deep Dark Woods. Boldt, unquestionably, has left an indelible mark on the development of the duo.

Clayton: “I met Ryan at the Chaplin Saskatchewan Community Hall. I was playing electric guitar in a travelling country cabaret band. I believe we were playing [George Jones’s] *The Race Is On*. Kacy and I were both big Deep Dark Woods fans, and I recognized Ryan when he came into the hall. I got a little bit nervous, turned the lever up on my guitar amp and played what I thought was a pretty good guitar solo. Then I had the confidence to go over and introduce myself. We talked about Mississippi John Hurt, Jean Richie, and Shirley Collins and that was the start of our friendship. Following that, Kacy and I would go and visit him in his home in Mortlach, Saskatchewan, a couple hours north of where we’ve grown up. That’s when we got to know Ryan pretty well and the rest of The Deep Dark Woods, too.

“He literally filled up my iPod with a lot of albums that I still consider to be the most influential. And I filled up Kacy’s iPod with basically the same albums: The Great Speckled Bird, Richard and Linda Thompson, all the Fairport Convention albums, The Stanley Brothers...music that has been a big influence on us.

“I heard Fairport’s version of *Matty Groves*. That just blew my mind. I knew about Anne Briggs and Bert Jansch before that but didn’t know much about British traditional songs. Fairport and Steeleye Span and Shirley Collins, one after another. I’m really into Nic Jones and Peter Bellamy right now, and The Watsons.

Kacy: “When I got into Fairport Convention, I really loved Sandy Denny. She’s my favourite singer of all time. And Maddy Prior, Shirley Collins, and Anne Briggs, people like that. I like plain styles of singing, nothing too fancy.”

Boldt recruited Clayton for The Deep Dark Woods as a guitarist. But now that the band are on sabbatical, he has formed Yarrow with Kacy (vocals) and Clayton (guitar), Shuyler Jansen (bass) and Mike Silverman (drums). They’ve an album coming out later this year on Six Shooter Records and a tour set for May in Ontario and Quebec.

But to the task at hand: *The Day Is Past & Gone*. The title comes from an old hymn not included on the album.

As implied, then, this disc reverberates with the refreshing strains of rural gospel, most obviously on Blind Willie Johnson’s *Let It Shine On Me* and the traditional *Cherry Tree Carol* and *I’ll Be So Glad*. But they can turn their hands to anything, these two, and their *Wood View* and *The Downward Road* slip gloriously into that old-time religion motif.

Clayton: “At the time, we were really into The Stanley Brothers and The Carter Family and all that. Blind Willie Johnson, the blind guitar players, are still a big influence. I guess what we are listening to at the time affects what we choose to record.”

Kacy: “The music we were listening to at the time was very gospel-based, old-time religion. We both grow up in a rural area. We’ve gone to a million funerals where they play *The Old Rugged Cross* and songs like that. I liked the old funeral songs so much I started working at a funeral home.”

Of course, it wouldn’t be a Kacy & Clayton album without traditional folk songs. And here they offer *Pretty Saro*, *Henry Martin*, *Green Grow The Laurels* and the semi-obscurer *The Dalesman’s Litany*, learned, as it happens, from the Tim Hart and Maddy Prior LP *Folk Songs of Old England Vol. 1* (1968). Obviously these two do their homework. But do they tinker with these old songs?

“Clayton and I do change some lyrics if we feel the need to,” says Kacy. “I used to feel insecure about singing from a man’s perspective about 90 per cent of the time. But then I decided to write a bunch of songs from a woman’s perspective. That solved that problem. We tinkered with *The Plains of Mexico*. There’s a thousand verses and different variations so we just picked and chose the ones we thought were good. When we recorded *Matty Groves* we changed that quite a bit, not really improving the song. I think it would have been better if we’d left it alone. But you learn from your mistakes.”

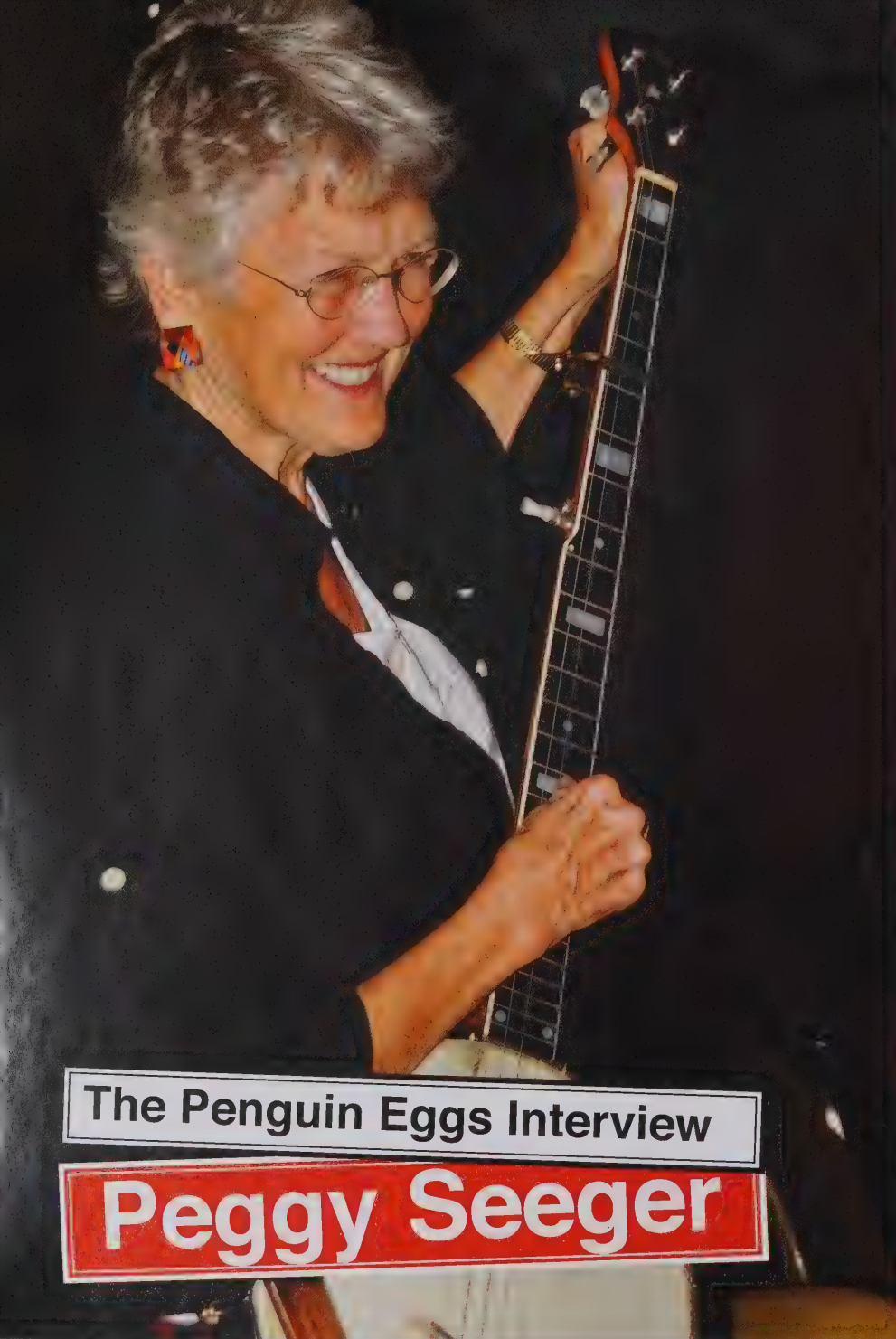
To prepare for *Strange Country*, they spent more time writing than trawling through their traditional archives. They road-tested their new songs with a band, too, prior to recording just to see how they would stand up with a rhythm section. Pretty well, as it turns out. Their next record, they reckon, will likely be more electric, “nothing too extreme” and all original material.

“That’s the direction we’re going in and we’ll see where that goes,” says Clayton. “We have a lot of ideas for albums and hopefully we can keep making them.”

We all do, Clayton. We most certainly do.

“I liked the  
old funer-  
al songs  
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I started  
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a funeral  
home.”  
– Kacy





## The Penguin Eggs Interview

# Peggy Seeger

**B**y anyone's standards, the renaissance of Peggy Seeger is astonishing. Life for her, you might say, has begun (again) at 80. Having triumphantly emerged from a series of debilitating mishaps and illnesses—the details of which she is only too happy to relate in brutally graphic detail—the great singer, songwriter, banjo player, raconteur, political activist, and folk music icon bustles around her picturesque home in the English countryside a stone's throw from the city of Oxford, proffering tea, nibbles, an-

ecdotes, and snatches of songs with the restless energy of someone a fraction of her age.

She celebrated her 80th birthday with a sell-out concert at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, wandering around and chatting amiably with the audience beforehand and then wowing them with a mesmerising set, flitting between instruments (an autoharp here, a guitar there), welcoming guest slots from the likes of Paul Brady and Eliza Carthy, performing *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face* with jaw-dropping starkness and filling the spaces between with flirtatious chatter and colourful vignettes from

her long and influential career.

No sentimental nostalgia here—this is a relevant, livewire, hungry performer still very much on her game...with an acclaimed album of fresh material, *Everything Changes*, under her belt. Among them *Swim To The Star*, an evocative story from the Titanic disaster, written with her son, Calum, which won Best New Song of the Year at last year's BBC Folk Awards.

The celebrations concentrated around the centenary of her late husband Ewan MacColl raised her profile even higher last year, culminating in more concerts and the release of the outstanding multi-artist double tribute album, *Joy Of Living*, featuring acts as varied as Steve Earle, Rufus & Martha Wainwright, Dick Gaughan, Christy Moore, Billy Bragg, Bombay Bicycle Club, Jarvis Cocker, and Chaim Tannenbaum.

The warmth of the welcome and gentleness of her tone as you cross the threshold is at odds with her reputation as a left-wing firebrand, forged during her long partnership with MacColl, when they effectively shaped and drove large swathes of the British folk song revival, fighting the good fight—civil rights, racism, unionism, strikes, feminism, capitalism, et al—in song and deed throughout the hurly burly of three decades together until MacColl's death in 1989.

Sister and half-sister to Mike and Pete Seeger, respectively, she was raised in a family of musicologists in Washington, DC, where the likes of Woody Guthrie, Lead Belly, and Rambling Jack Elliott were regular visitors, *Freight Train* singer Elizabeth Cotten worked as a home help, and the socialist ideals of folk song were ingrained in her psyche from birth.

She still worries about the world—fracking, war-mongering politicians, and over-population especially concern her. But, eternally elegant and gracious, she pours tea, smiles sweetly and says, “So...what would you like to know?” she asks **Colin Irwin**

### Where were you brought up?

Washington, DC. 10001 Dallas Avenue. It was a place where you could run free and pick four-leaf clovers in the fields. And there were no kerb crawlers or paedophiles running around after you. The worst thing was there were two bully boys and a chicken farmer next door and you could always hear chickens being slaughtered. But we were free. It was my mother's heyday. She had three little children and a new baby and she was happy. The memories are etched like a friendly Kafka over



everything I do. She never had the chance to hear any of the music made by Mike or me or Penny or any of her grandchildren—she would have loved it.

**The title track of your album *Everything Changes* is about your mother, Ruth Crawford?**

Yes. I lost her when I was 18 and we weren't getting along. No fault of hers. She just didn't know how to cope with a rude, sulking teenager. Instead of saying, 'I want a baby', if everyone said, 'I want a teenager', we'd have less of a population problem. I was sent to boarding school at 15 because I was so horrible to my mother. When her youngest child was 10 she wrote a string quartet piece which won a prize and I was so proud of her. I was about 16 and she was writing again. It was a tragedy she died so young. If she'd lived another 25 years she'd have flown. But she didn't get that chance. Cancer runs in our family.

**You were brought up with folk song—did you ever rebel against it?**

No, I never wanted to. My mother had these big aluminium records she got from the Library of Congress. During the war they had cardboard records you could only play for a certain amount of time before they wore out so my mother would go to the Library of Congress, listen to songs, choose the ones she wanted to transcribe and they'd create these 16-inch aluminium records, which she'd lug on the bus to play at home with a thorn needle. You can't use a steel needle on aluminium because it wears it out. I heard that stuff all

through my childhood. I'd be playing in a corner and she'd be playing these chain gang songs, murder ballads, children's tunes, and work songs. She had me transcribing by the time I was 11 and paid me a nickel for each one. It was invaluable. Even now if you sing a tune at me I can see it. I was immersed in both folk song and classical music at the same time.

**Were you close to your half-brother Pete?**

I don't know if anybody was close to Pete. It was difficult to get close to Pete. You meet, you hug, and have a little talk but the one time I tried to interview him about his life he'd go off about things he knew and read about. When that mind closed down when he died we lost an encyclopaedia of Americana. He knew so much and he was still learning right up until he died. He was interested in things you had to say. I don't know that he ever name-called in his songs, which are optimistic in the main part. We had a few little battles. He once sang me a new song he'd made called *We'll All Be A-Doubling*, a fun song about over-population, which I thought was too light-hearted 'cause I think we're going to eat up the world the way it's going unless we all become vegetarians. He had a very fertile mind and some of his songs are devastatingly lovely. I sing one of them, *Quite Early Morning*, and changed some of it. He listened intently to what I did and said, 'That's very nice, Peggy, but I don't think I'll be singing those words'.

**It must have been amazing growing up with all these folk legends visiting the house...**

Yes. The only ones I remember staying were Jack Elliott and Guy Carawan, and I think the reason they stayed were that they did their own laundry and baked bread. My mother didn't take to Woody Guthrie at all—he was a bit too rough for my mother. When I was five or six, I remember this big black man at the door and I thought, 'Wow!'. It was Lead Belly. He came in with Alan and probably John Lomax. He was only allowed out of prison if he was with Alan Lomax. I think he was doing a concert with Pete. I remember sitting on my mother's lap and they were singing in a boxing ring in Washington. Lead Belly got on well with my mother. Pete would have brought Woody. I remember him putting his guitar on the floor and pulling it around by the strap, pretending it was a dog.

**Big Bill Broonzy?**

I sang at the Gate Of Horn (Chicago) with Big Bill Broonzy for three or four weeks. He'd sing for an hour and I'd sing for an hour and then we'd have a break and we'd go on from 11 to 3 in the morning. It was a little dive but it had the best burgers you ever tasted. And Bill would just sit there drinking brandy straight. He didn't talk much. He had a pink Cadillac and took Blind Lemon Jefferson around in it. I met Mississippi John Hurt—he came to one of the folklore meetings I was at. My sister's rotten husband wouldn't shake hands with him because he was black. John didn't say anything—he just left. Washington, DC, was very racist then. Not one of the garbage men was white and everyone had black helpers.



Mike, Peggy and Pete



Big Bill Broonzy



**That's how you knew Elizabeth Cotten... didn't she rescue you when you were lost in a department store when you were a child?**

Memories differ whether it was me or my sister, Penny. I used to wander off. My mother only had to turn her back and I was gone. My mother taught piano in the house six hours a day so she needed help in the house so on Saturdays Libba came and mostly did ironing and laundry. We had a guitar hanging in the kitchen. When people say, 'Oh, my children aren't interested in playing music'—just leave instruments around and eventually they'll try them. Anyway, one day we came into the kitchen and there was Libba playing and it was absolutely delightful.

My brother, Mike, did a wonderful thing by taking her out on tour and he made the last 20 years of her life a wonderful adventure. He opened for her, drove her from this place to that, and did the same thing for a number of southern singers. He was the most altruistic of the three of us. He didn't have an ego problem the way Pete and I both had. Mike encouraged and discovered a lot of those old singers we'd grown up with on those old aluminium records. He found them and gave them the audience they deserved and they flowered. Libba flourished and, of course, everyone was fascinated by the fact that she played the guitar so-called backwards. She was very modest but once you got her onstage you couldn't get her off it. Nor would you want to.

**So what brought you to the U.K.?**

I'd been hitch-hiking around Europe. I was in a youth hostel in Copenhagen. I'd just been saved from a Catholic priest down in Belgium. Long story. I was taking care of 13 displaced children in his house and I slept with five of the girls in this great big double bed and he was trying to talk me into taking charge at the nearby nunnery. Some friends of mine were disturbed by the letters I was writing so they came down, prised me into the back seat of this little Fiat, and we went to Denmark. It was freezing. I was then going to go to Finland with a logger who told me my eyes were the colour of time when Alan Lomax phoned me. He said he needed someone to play banjo on a TV show in London. I'd never been to England and I'd never been on TV, so I took the trip.

**Do you remember meeting Ewan for the first time?**

Oh, yes. He was a very strange-looking man.

I'd never had a man friend before. I'd had boyfriends but no man friends. He gave me a ticket to see him in *The Threepenny Opera*, where he was the ballad singer and the vision that appeared was like nothing I'd ever gone for in the past. He had an old battered hat and stomach pushed out. He was 41 and had a bit of a paunch by then with braces and dirty old trousers and makeup that made him look twice his age. But I was entranced by his voice. Two days later, he told me he was in love with me and was going to make love to me. I didn't even know what lovemaking was. In America, they didn't say that, they just screwed. So that was romantic. And then I found out he was married with a child. There's nothing romantic about falling in love with a married man twice your age. But he was fascinating. For 30 years 24/7 he was fascinating and I was never bored.

We had a good life. The minute we finished one project we were on to another. And he was a good father...well, until the boys were teenagers and there was a bit of aggro. He was a great storyteller. The stories he told them out of his head were amazing. After our first child, Neill, was born I went into a kind of nosedive and he immediately came up with a recording project and, wham, I was out of it. He said I was free to leave him. He said he wanted two years of my life—he wanted more but said two years would be fine. But when you're free to leave, you stay; that's good psychology.

**Together you gave great impetus to the British folk revival over which you had a profound influence, but you were controversial, too. Some criticized what they regarded**

**as a dogmatic approach to the way folk songs should be performed...**

Oh, we were snobs. A lot of artists probably are, but we were vocal about it. We made a study of other cultures, the way they sang and tried to get some study going of how to sing these songs. Most people singing them knew about pop songs, some knew about classical or music hall or jazz, but they didn't know about folk songs. So how would they know how to sing them? Some of the Americans singing them like Martha Schlamme, the Kingston Trio, and John Jacob Niles did it in a souped up way, which lost a lot of integrity and balance, so we tried to work out a way of singing that was true to the music because a lot of these songs have a class allegiance. It's not about showing how well you can sing, it's about representing a way of life, and we felt they deserved a certain objectivity and setting yourself apart from an egotistical exhibition of yourself and your voice. People with very good voices sometimes have trouble singing folk songs because they are so busy listening

**EWAN MacCOLL**  
with **PEGGY SEEGER** guitar & banjo



Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger



to how good their voices are. We tried to work out a way of singing but we went about it the wrong way.

**Ewan wrote *First Time Ever I Saw Your Face* for you to sing. What was your reaction when Roberta Flack did it?**

We hated it. Because it milked the song. Especially the ending. Ewan wrote it as an *hors d'oeuvre* and it got turned into an *entrée*. He wrote it like a bird singing, like a cardiograph on graph paper, and it got slowed down and milked. Mind you, I like the way she does it now. It's been done in every musical style. I've heard it done hip-hop, country, as an anthem, in four-part harmony...the song should be dead now but one of the reasons it's still there is it has that incremental repetition that's all over folk song. The images in it are clear. It's passionate. Elvis did it but he didn't lay with her, he danced with her! I still love singing it. I couldn't sing it for about 15 years after Ewan died, but I can now. I have to be in very good voice to sing it though—I think when they did the mastectomy they damaged something because I have trouble with some of the notes and have to work around it.

**How did you come to write the feminist anthem *I'm Gonna Be An Engineer*?**

I wrote it for one of the Festival Of Fools shows we did. My original version had a very depressing last verse and I took it to Ewan and he said you need a cheerful last verse so I went back downstairs and rewrote the ending. Ironically, when we did it at the show we all dressed ourselves in very short mini-skirts, eight of us women standing in a V on the stage. Oh, dear! When it was taken up I didn't know anything about the feminist movement and I was suddenly invited to all these very radical meetings and asked to sing it and they'd say, 'Great, sing us another one,' and I didn't have any more. I just had folk songs, which, let's face it, are hardly feminist. So that's why I started writing women's songs.

**Can you ever hope to change anything through political song?**

Every song has a different purpose. I mostly sing for the converted anyway, but singing together can be quite important. I write political songs because I feel I have to. I wrote *Progress Train* in an absolute fury. Sometimes people like to hear their own views validated. Laughter is a very important weapon, too. In a

way, if you write an angry song about someone it's confrontational but if you laugh at them, you're putting them down and they can't fight it. If you get angry they can fight back but you can't fight laughter.

**Do you get many adverse reactions?**

I've had people walk out when I've sung *Goodbye Georgie*, about George Bush. One guy stalked out when I sang two feminist songs in a row, saying, 'I didn't come to hear this!'. Men don't always want to hear that stuff. It's better now, though. I'm getting more and more young people coming to see me.

**Most memorable gig in Canada?**

In Canada there's a town called Geraldton, a mining town. Took two days to drive there. It was like a John Wayne film...a hotel with half swing doors and a whole stack of oldies with their feet up on rails. It was the moose hunting season. So we're getting ready for the concert and nobody's there and suddenly they all come in with their bags of moose meat and moose head and the place is stinking with the smell of blood. Ewan opens with *Broomfield Hill* and I do *Handsome Molly* and then Ewan does a funny song and not a peep of laughter. He then tells a joke. Nothing. Yet there's huge applause at the end. In the interval, we ask the organizer about it and he says, 'Oh, they don't speak English, they're all Finns!'. So we took that on board and did more spectacular stuff in the second half and they loved the banjo and invited us round to their houses after and hauled everything out of the fridge and the stench of garlic hits you because they are making moose sausage with garlic in the bathtub. A whole town where nobody spoke English!

**Are you pessimistic about the world?**

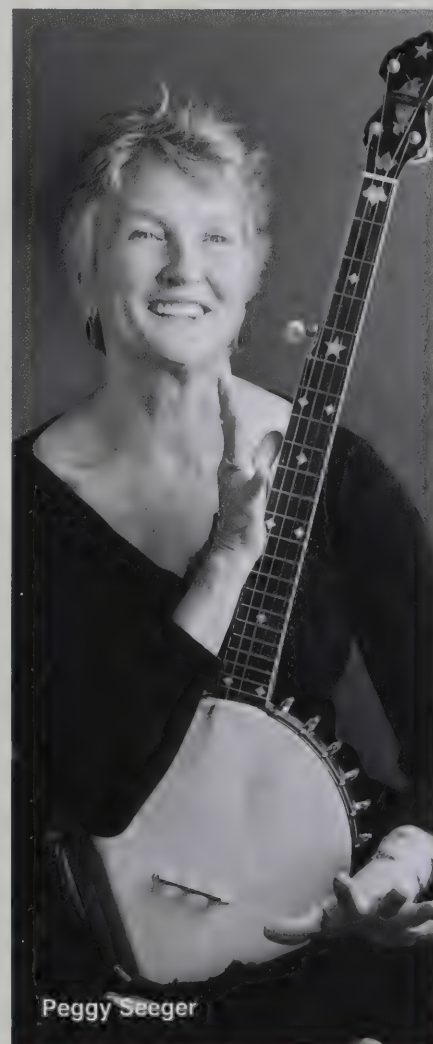
I'm afraid I am. It's the assumption that the only way to solve anything is with wars and violence and not being able to do anything about it. There's a song in New Zealand that goes on for four or five minutes with one line and the line is, 'Let the women take over running the world before it's too late', repeated over and over. That's not to say women are perfect but there do seem to be an awful lot of rampaging men all over the place who just love getting out there with their armies and planes. How do you deal with that?

**You've been working closely with your son, Calum—how does that work out?**

Working with Calum is absolutely wonderful. The first album I did with him was *An Odd Collection* and I told him I wanted to hire him as producer and musical director, and he said, 'Mum, you can't afford me'. I did some research and found out how much he charged—and, believe me, he's not cheap!—and went back and said I could afford him and there was a pregnant silence and he said he'd think about it. The next day, we had a meeting and he said, 'OK, I'll do it, but I am not your son, I am your producer, musical director, and musician and if I tell you you're out of tune, then you're out of tune and if I tell you you're tired you stop singing'. It was great taking direction from Calum. I don't think I could have done that a few years ago.

**Have you mellowed with age?**

I don't know about that but I've slowed down a lot. I still love it, though. I like to think I've got another 15 years doing this...



Peggy Seeger



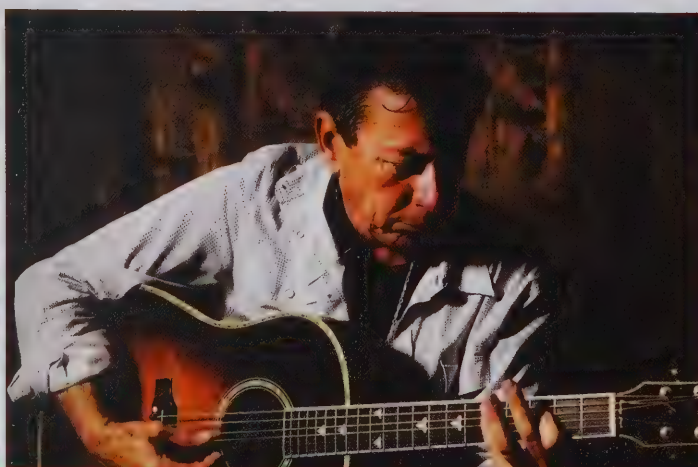
# Reviews



**61** David Francey



**54** Bonnie Raitt



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**51** Maria Dunn





## Bob Dylan

1965-1966 The Cutting Edge The Bootleg Series Vol 12 (Columbia)

In 1965 I was escorted out of a front-row seat at the Hollywood Bowl as Bob Dylan was debuting his song *Desolation Row*. I'd snuck down to hear it up close and got busted. I cocked my ear as I was dragged away. The song changed my life. What was he saying? Now we get a close-up glimpse of the process.

The bottom line is staggering: within 15 months in 1965 and '66, Bob Dylan recorded and released three game-altering records: *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and *Blonde on Blonde*. The sessions resulted in dozens of classics and a legion of outtakes and inspired moments—changing the face of modern folk music. All sessions have been released in full. *The Dylan Bootleg Series Volume 12* might be the best bet (six discs, 111 tracks of rarities and out-takes). Herein we observe Dylan's process up close. A process which is at once mystifying, illuminating, intimidating, and matchless.

This is a full-on vision of the young artist in the studio. We listen to Dylan starting and stopping songs. Renaming them. Starting over. Moods shift, titles change, awkward poetry is smoothed into

art. He keeps carving (in a matter of days) until the masterpiece unfolds. Dozens. The obdurate shard *Like A Woman* eventually ends up the epic classic *Just Like a Woman*. *Visions of Johanna* survives dozens of off-base rock feels, until it glides safely home into a Rimbaud-influenced love ballad for all time.

Finally, to nail the point down, *Like A Rolling Stone* survives days and days of rough transitions and dead-end turnarounds, and young Bob blowing his voice out—to become the most important rock song of all time, with an opening snare drum call-to-attention that is the shot heard 'round the world. There is a full disc (#3) devoted to the step-by-step architecture of *Like A Rolling Stone*—a song that begins in static waltz time and emerges dozens of takes later as the masterpiece.

Highlights of the 111 tracks include the creative gestation of *Love Minus Zero/No Limit*, a song that extended our notion of modern love song, the polishing of Bob's kiss-my-ass ballad *Positively 4th Street*, an outtake version of *Tombstone Blues* with The Chambers Brothers singing backup, and on and on...there's also unreleased gems *Jet Pilot* and *I'll Keep It With Mine*, which Nico later recorded. I may be a Dylan

snob, but I truly dig all of it. Over and over. My wife is planning to commit me.

There's also Dylan's humorous repartee with producer Tom Wilson, and the searing lead guitar work of Mike Bloomfield, but the showstopper is always Dylan's ability to build and edit his art until the finished song rises above the commonplace. He walks a lyrical high wire, attempts a few full-on back flips, suffers the belly flops, and emerges unscathed. This is not music of an era, entrapped forever in the '60s; these songs and half-songs erase the critical notion of a bygone, dated era of rock'n'roll. Much of Dylan's competition failed to survive the impact of these sessions.

As a fellow songwriter I find his accomplishments here as impressive and impossible as Van Gogh painting 300 masterworks within a year. I would suggest as a fitting companion piece: *Van Gogh's Letters: The Mind of the Artist in Paintings, Drawings, and Words, 1875-1890*. Vincent and Bob dancing with Bach, Beethoven, Michelangelo...a creative world where almost every sketch, each drawn and erased line, leads to a final moment etched in eternity.

— By Tom Russell



## Nuala Kennedy

Behave The Bravest (Under The Arch)



A beautiful release here from Ms. Kennedy, flautist and singer in

the Irish tradition. She's assembled a cracking band of international origin, deftly avoided trans-Atlantic influences (i.e. no bluegrass here, folks, this is the real Irish deal), and delivers a deep, rich set with a heavy emphasis on traditional songs. Truth be told, there are some pieces that aren't, strictly speaking, Irish, such as a stellar reworking of *Death And The Lady* (English) and *Lovely Armoy* (Scottish).

But you'd never know it as they fit so seamlessly alongside those that are. So. Yeah. If you're a fan of the acoustic purveyors of traditional tune and song this one's for you.

— By Richard Thornley

## Eric Bibb & JJ Milteau

Lead Belly's Gold (Stony Plain)



Call me crazy, but Eric Bibb has established such high standards with his

original compositions that these same standards must be applied to this predominantly live recording.

Anyone who has ever witnessed Bibb's powers in person is testament to his gentle storytelling genius, equipped with satin-smooth vocals and head-turning guitar-playing skills. So it's difficult to understand why he's jumped



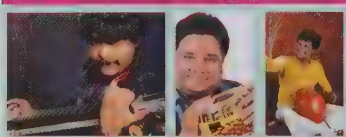
# Raga Mala

Edmonton Raga-Mala Music Society presents



## 6 MAR LOCAL ARTISTS

OJAS JOSHI, DEEPSHIKHA  
JOSHI, SNEHA KUMAR



## 1 APR VEENA

RAJHESH VAIDHYA  
MOHANARAMAN  
SAI HARI



## 16 APR SITAR & SAROD

MITA NAG, JOYDEEP GHOSH  
SUBHEN CHATTERJEE



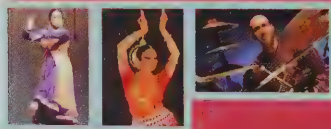
## 28 MAY VOCAL

HEMANT PENDSE  
HARSHAD KHANETKAR



## 25 JUN HANSA VEENA

BARUN KUMAR PAL  
SUBHAJYOTI GUHA



## 17 SEP ODISSI KATHAK

ENAKSHI SINHA  
SUDESHNA MAULIK  
SHAWN MATIVETSKY



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on the Tribute Bandwagon—a wagon who's own wheels buckle under the sheer weight of releases of late—when his original work is so much more powerful than anything he might cover.

Needless to say, he's capable of injecting new life into the Lead Belly canon and the addition of JJ Milteau's talents on harp and the added musicians around the stage (of the famed Paris club The Sunset) make a formidable team.

However, so much of it comes off like a campfire singalong, feeling more contractual than creative or essential. As interesting as it can be to better appreciate an artist for his influences and motivations, how much more pleasure can be derived from listening to *Goodnight Irene*, *Rock Island Line*, or *Midnight Special*?

— By Eric Thom

## Various Artists

God Don't Never Change: The Songs of  
Blind Willie Johnson (Alligator Records)



Finding musicians to fill out a tribute album for a revered blues pioneer is easy; choosing the right ones is a much harder task. Producer Jeffrey Gaskill reaches outside of the usual range of expected performers to assemble *God Don't Never Change: The Songs of Blind Willie Johnson*. For many, Tom Waits will be the star attraction; given two songs to apply his deconstructionist impulses, the singer/songwriter yelps through the scrappy *John the Revelator* and a holy rolling *Soul of a Man*, if anything showing that he's kin to Johnson in a way that many modern blues musicians aren't. They're both highlights, but not the only ones.

The slurred, spooky version of *Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground* by Rickie Lee Jones has a way of seeping into your bones on repeated listening, while both Lucinda Williams (*God Don't Never Change*) and Sinead O'Connor (*Trouble Will Soon Be Over*) expertly ride the uneasy bridge between overt reverence

and inserting one's own personality into Johnson's eerie missives.

Everyone involved treats the singer/songwriter's gospel heart with a great deal of respect, but only the Blind Boys of Alabama straightforwardly address it; they invest an assured, beautifully measured *Mother's Children Have a Hard Time* with the dignity and deep loneliness that you always found in the best of Johnson's work.

— By Tom Murray

## Eli West

The Both (Independent)

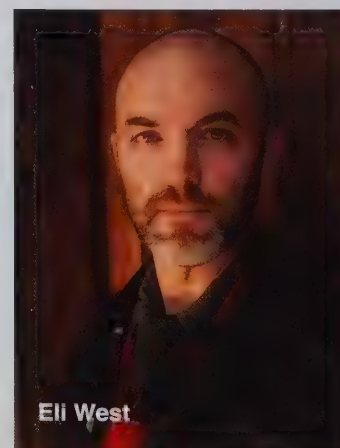


This magazine is in your hands, right now, because of an abiding

interest in folk music. You're reading these words, too, because of a desire to know something, or learn something, about a kind of music that inspires you to do so. What all that means is you need to put the magazine down now, go over to the computer, and start listening to Eli West's new release, *The Both*.

It is a recording that is remarkable in really any which way you care to look at it, though, for the most part, because of West himself, and the ways in which he chooses to shine a light on the music and the traditions that he clearly adores. Which, like you, is folk music, or Americana, or whatever the name might be.

As they say about pornography, we may not be able to define it but we know it when we see it. Well,



Eli West



in this case, you'll know it when you hear this material that West has similar passions to your own.

So, if you are still reading, stop, go and listen and come back, and then we'll talk some more. I'll wait.

OK. See what I'm talking about? There's a cast of musicians here ranging from Bill Frizell (!) to Anna Roberts Gevault and Elizabeth LaPrelle; from John Reishman (!) to Dori Freeman. Or, put another way, jazz to traditional, old friends to those, very happily, of new acquaintance. The songs are like that, too, from newer ones to the song that A.P. Carter wrote/arranged without knowing that he was basically writing his obituary: *Lonesome Valley*. Those are the kinds of dualities that the album title is intended to refer to.

And then there's this. Brace yourself: the album presents six songs with vocals, and then the same six songs as instrumentals and with new arrangements. Sounds gimmicky, or like he was trying to fill out the project but feeling a bit lazy, or at a loss for what to include.

But the result isn't that at all. It's riveting. Like turning a rock around and around and finding that it's different every way, and that it reveals itself only when you've seen it all, even though you can only look at it one side at a time.

Anyway, given that you have this magazine in your hands, and are looking at these words here, I think it's safe to say this: you need to hear this album. And sing along to it. And give it to your friends, saying, "check this out".

— By Glen Herbert

## Basia Bulat

*Good Advice* (Secret City Records)



I love performers who continually experiment, change and grow with each outing of new work. Basia falls squarely and comfortably in that camp. She is a brave, confident performer who is on a journey of exploration



Maria Dunn

through her art.

If you look up Basia Bulat on Wikipedia, her entry opens with "Basia Bulat is a Canadian folk singer/songwriter. She is known for performing with an autoharp."

You really shouldn't be expecting only that anymore anyway, as her last Polaris Prize-nominated album added synths and omnichords. *Good Advice* goes many steps farther with the addition of RMI Electra, Acetone, and Multivox pianos, Mellotron, some organs—pump and otherwise—and the mysterious, zither-like Marxophone. The autoharp does make an appearance, though, in one song.

All that adds up to a lovely, moody collection of 10 songs of break-up and survival, clothed

and swaddled in ethereal layers of synth pop clouds. An adventurous and courageous piece of work from an artist in full flight.

— By les siemieniuk

## Maria Dunn

*Gathering* (Independent)



You can always rely on Maria Dunn to stand up and be counted. Be

it gender issues, environmental concerns, social injustice, racism ... Dunn's songs rail, albeit in the gentlest manner possible, against grievances that most of her contemporaries turn their back on. And with *Gathering*, she doesn't give an inch lyrically. Nor does she batter you with shouty polemics. Her songs tell of ordinary people and their day-to-day struggles living in inner-city slums, reservations or refugee camps. Such a courageous view from this frame of reference makes the plight of the downtrodden so humanely vivid.

Musically, it's her most rewarding recording to date as she incorporates elements of world music, bits of brass, even an uplifting Gaelic chorus Julie

Fowlis would be proud to chant. As usual, fiddler Shannon Johnson and her two siblings Jeremiah and Solon McDade provide the elegant shading that has come to highlight Dunn's previous discs.

I swear, every one of her recordings offers at least one track that deserves immortality within the folk tradition. And *Gathering* has the gorgeously heartrending *When I was Young* — a profound, personal look at the Athabasca River told from the perspective of a resident of Fort McKay, 60 kms downstream from the tar sands at Fort McMurray. If it doesn't bring a lump to your throat, you're already beyond help. Essential listening, then, this *Gathering*.

— By Roddy Campbell

## Tim Williams

*So Low* (Lowden Proud)



There can be no better sound than that of a musician who's audibly having

one hell of a good time. Alberta's own Tim Williams eclipses his last solid release with this collection of 10 guitar-based acoustic blues compositions—a category of which, in the hands of so many others, has so often become a stilted rehash of yesterday's sounds.

There's nothing approaching "heard it all before" in this boisterous collection of favoured covers from some of Williams's heroes. He plays with absolute vigour and his own spirited originals reveal the keen sense of humour (*So Low*?) that is always bubbling underneath the jaw-dropping skills that capture one's attention.

Williams offers some of the finest finger picking you're liable to hear while his expressively youthful-sounding vocals make *So Low* a great case for loving the blues. Stripped down, toe-tap-inducing, overdub-free blues served up *au piquant*, this is blues as it's supposed to be played.

What a treat it would be to witness this liquid energy live.

— By Eric Thom



Basia Bulat



## Duane Andrews

Conception Bay (Independent)



Newfoundland jazz guitarist, composer, and collaborator

Duane Andrews has done it again. Following his previous collaboration with Craig Young on *Charlie's Boogie*, combining flat-picking country with Django-style jazz, Andrews has brought it back home, mixing Gypsy-type jazz with Newfoundland music and making it swing on his latest release, *Conception Bay*. His collaborators on the project are Mark Fewer (violin), Lynn Kuo (violin), Amahl Arulanandam (cello), and Angela Pickett (viola).

The result defies categories as the combo moves deftly through reels, ballads, swing numbers, and even improvisations on Chopin and Stravinsky, passing around the instrumental leads on this infectious, playful album.

The album includes three Duane

Andrews compositions: *Nantes*, *Gigues*, and *Conception Bay*; two Django Reinhardt numbers, *Oriental Shuffle*, and *Swing 39*; the lullaby from Stravinsky's *Firebird*; Otto Kelland's *Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's*; improvisations on Chopin's *Opus 64, No. 2*; a set of traditional Newfoundland reels; and the album finishes with a sprightly version of *Sweet Georgia Brown*. The thing that ties this eclectic mix together is the underlying swing rhythms and the sweetness of the playing. If swing is your thing, you'll want a copy of this delightfully inventive album.

— By Gene Wilburn

## John Carroll

Live at the Acoustic Grill (Independent)



Seemingly out of nowhere, this little, unassuming live disc—recorded at Picton's Acoustic Grill—reveals a powerful artist with multiple

gifts. His third release, Carroll hails from Ottawa and has outdone himself by managing to stay under most people's radar over the course of his 25-year career.

Marketing abilities aside, it's not because of any shortcoming in his talents as this disc reveals a beefy, booming voice (of the sort that makes you conjure who owns it), playing acoustic guitar with a rich, finger-style touch sounding, at times, like three players at once.

Awkward, between-song banter aside, Carroll covers Blind Willie Johnson (*What Is The Soul Of A Man*) and Gram Parsons (*Hickory Wind*) but it's his own compositions that command attention. Quite possibly pigeon-holed as a Waits-like vocalist, there are enough blues and country influences here to place Carroll squarely in a Guy Clark camp, vocally more robust and obviously less Texan. His material is largely observational, sometimes conversational and definitely part confessional.

The addition of fellow Bytown singer Birdie Whyte on two tracks provides an intriguing blend, adding significant contrast to his somewhat burly sound. None of which prepares the listener for his Parsons cover—achieving a touching, high-lonesome sound with equal parts aching heart—suggesting a range yet to be fully tapped.

— By Eric Thom

## Bentall Taylor Ulrich

Tightrope Walk (Borealis)



Craftsmanship takes over from inspiration in the second album from

industry vets Barney Bentall, Tom Taylor (of Vancouver cult act *She Stole My Beer*), and Shari Ulrich. The loose affiliation of singer/songwriters is a pleasant one, drawing on the strains of folk, rock, and country they've all dallied with at one time or another in their careers, but with little of the preciousness you see in some

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Ulrich's voice might be the highlight on many of these songs, *You Got Lost* in particular being a minor gem, though the mandolin-laced *The Cowboy And The Horse* is also a sweet little roots amble with some lyrical depth.

By and large a low-key, acoustic affair, *Tightrope Walk* doesn't really let loose, except on the first track, *Chased By The Devil*, in which you might hear a little snatch of Taylor and Bentall's rocking past peek over the insistent train beat.

— By Tom Murray

## Lucy Ward

*I Dreamt I Was A Bird* (Betty Beetroot)



First time I heard Lucy Ward I kinda shuddered and skipped along to an easier bit

of ear candy. Perhaps I was just in a bad mood; although Lucy's not one for easy listening, she demands (and rewards) your ears. An English singer/songwriter, barely into her mid-20s, *I Dreamt* is her third release and it's a keeper.

Deep, still waters abound on this largely original set of songs that bear witness to the influences of English folk music, yes, but also the less mainstream ends of rock, psychedelia, and jazz. *Return To Earth* is a beautiful example: starting with a quiet drumbeat, it eases in the banjo and electric bass, unsettling choral harmonies, and ends with some tasty bass distortion and nagging strings. Lucy's

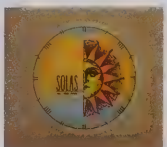


songs are poetic but penetrable and there's ample food for many hours of thought here.

— By Richard Thornley

## Solas

*All These Years* (Independent)



When Solas burst on the music scene in 1996 the quintet was the finest Irish-American band yet heard. Two decades later it still is—well, maybe. *All These Years* isn't any kind of retrospective of Solas's development but a maturation

and rebalancing of the elements that made the band such a force. Founding members Winifred Horan (fiddle) and Séamus Egan (flute, whistle, tenor banjo, guitar) haven't slowed down, but there are fewer hell-bent-for-leather sets of reels, and greater variety and slow melodies. The arrangements remain impeccable.

Solas always emphasized singing, but on *All These Years* the ratio of songs to instrumental sets is clearly tipped in favour of vocals. Of the 16 tracks, 10 are songs. Original lead singer Karan Casey's gorgeously understated voice returns on *You Are Not Alone* and the lilting traditional *Sixteen Come Next Sunday*, and the album features no less than five other female singers. Moira Smiley has four songs and Deirdre Scanlan, Noria,na Kennedy, Mairead Phelan, Niamh Varian Barry one each. The incomparable Casey aside, it feels unbalanced, and I found myself wanting more dance tunes showcasing the hot virtuosity of Horan, Egan, and accordionist Mick McAuley.

— By Tony Montague

## Sugar Brown

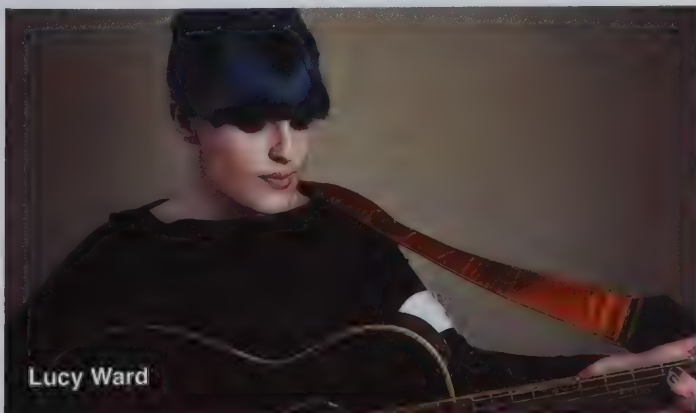
*Poor Lazarus* (Independent)



Sugar Brown's debut was a show-stopping moment in

Canadian blues. That an unknown scholar of music and East Asian history (a.k.a. Ken Kawashima) could come up—seemingly out of nowhere—to craft such an authentic-sounding, Chess-flavoured taste of Chicago blues was unthinkable, but true.

This erudite next chapter embraces a wider platform of pre-'50s blues, incorporating the Texas charms of country blues artists such as Frankie Lee Sims (*Walkin' With Frankie*) and, as before, mixed and matched with the 'younger' bloodlines of artists such as Tom Waits (*Get Behind The Mule*) and R.L. Burnside (*Goin' Down South*). The title track—literally triggered by the real-world events of Ferguson, yet combed from the Lomax files of more than 100 years ago—works in conjunction with Brown's equally raw, nerve-jangling







# 'LESS IS MORE'

## GORDIE TENTREES

"Very superior songs on a terrific album, heartfelt and hysterical!" *R2 Mag (5 stars)*

"Majestic songwriting, genuine authenticity, incredible insight!" *Americana UK*

"Sounds like an album Woody Guthrie or Bob Dylan might have done if they were starting out today" *(WSJ) Irish Post*

"Another Canadian showing us how to write great Americana Songs" *Rocking Magpie*

"A lean, tough disc that the listener will want to dip into again and again!" *Penguin Eggs*

"An album full of heart and homespun wisdom" *Bob Mersereau (CBC Radio)*

**TENTREES.CA**  /TENTREES74  GORDIETENTREES

originals, carefully recorded off-the-floor through tube amps and mastered in Mono to tape for full analogue effect.

Again partnered with superb harpist Bharath Rajakumar, additional colours are added—sax, percussion, backup vocals—as required by each carefully arranged composition.

Brown's battered vocal style and country-flavoured guitar are key to the band's dated-sounding, yet incredibly legitimate, sound.

— By Eric Thom

### Bonnie Raitt

Dig In Deep (Redwing Records)



Bonnie Raitt's been around for years (her first release was back in

1971!) but it has to be said that she's never sounded as relaxed, confident, and in full control of all her various talents—vocal and musical—as she does on this latest disc. Maybe it's having her own record company since 2012, a regular group of musicians on the last couple of discs, or producer Joe Henry.

Whatever. The disc knocks it out of the park from the first track, *Unintended Consequences Of Love*, with John Cleary's funky piano and Mike Finnigan's hot B3 organ work, backed by the loose, relaxed, but right-in-the-pocket shuffle groove of drummer, Ricky Fataar.

The rest of the disc is a mixture of her own compositions interspersed with other writers, notably Michael Hutchence and Andrew

Farriss's *Need You Tonight*, and *Shakin' Shakin' Shakes* by Cesar Rosas and T-Bone Burnett.

On her earlier discs for major labels, she could sometimes lapse into a kind of standard bar-blues-band thing but she mostly avoids that here, keeping the relaxed but deep feeling of a true master, as the title implies, also dipping into the acoustic guitar stylings of Joe Henry, Bill Frisell, and Greg Leisz from a 2010 session on *You've Changed My Mind*.

She even trades off her trademark guitar for piano on two tracks, most engagingly on the ballad *The Ones We Couldn't Be* to close things out. Her regular fans will no doubt be pleased but if you've never warmed up to her sound in all these years try this one out!

— By Barry Hammond

### Matthew Barber & Jill Barber

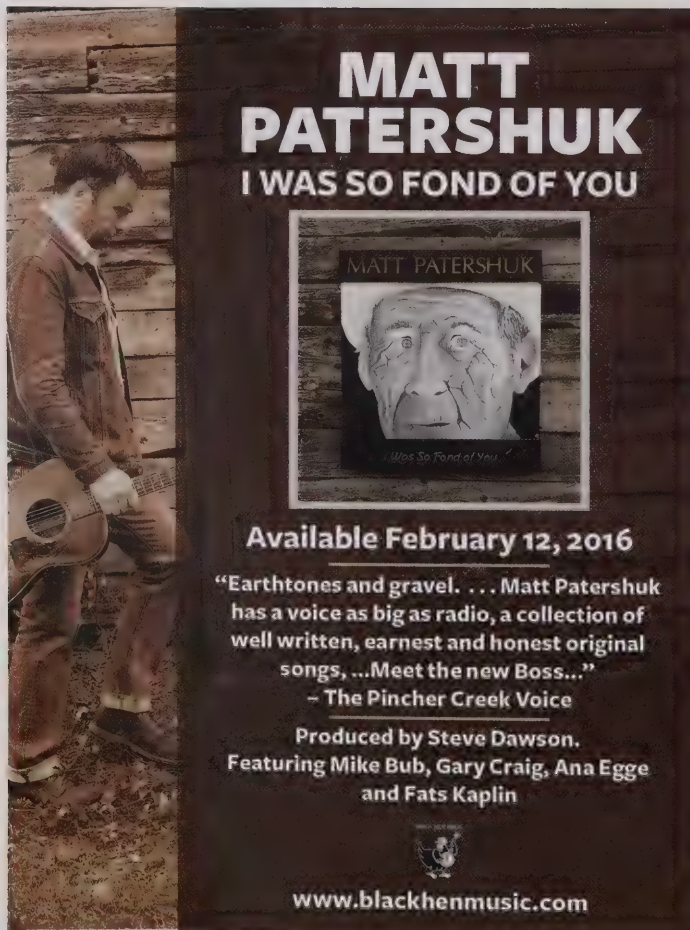
The Family Album (Outside Music)



**Siblings**  
Matthew and Jill Barber have been making roots music

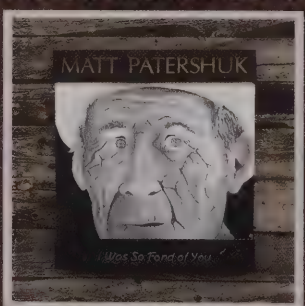
separately for more than 15 years. As closely aligned as their styles are, it was inevitable that they would team up. Their new record, the 12-song *The Family Album* is a folksy strummer with five original compositions and a number of well-chosen tunes from the classic folk music songbook.

One of the highlights is *Grandpa Joe*, an ode to the siblings' maternal grandfather they never knew, with a timeless quality akin to the



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best of the classic tunes covered on the album.

The Barbers' interpretation of the Ian & Sylvia classic *Summer Wages* is another gem, gorgeous harmonies and effortless instrumentation. Likewise, a rendition of P.E.I. singer Gene MacClellan's *Song To A Young Seagull*.

Additional covers include tunes from the likes of Neil Young and Townes Van Zandt.

*The Family Album* is understated in a good way, concentrating on the delicate vocal interplay between the two accomplished crooners creating savoury musical gems ideal for a quiet summer afternoon.

— By Ron Johnson

## Tinariwen

Live In Paris 2014 (Anti-)



If, like me, you've been lucky enough to catch this ground-break-

ing Tuareg band's live show before, then you'll have a pretty good idea of what to expect from this, their first-ever live album. The additional magic you won't be expecting though, is the appearance of the grand dame of Tamasheq culture, 75-year-old singer Lalla Badi, who sings on three of the 12 songs featured. She's in fine form throughout,

as are the rest of the band, and it's obvious Ibrahim and company are holding sway over the smitten Parisian audience, as they lay down choice slices of their trademark, trance-inducing, West African blues. In many ways, the live dynamic provides an ideal setting for the group's languorous, long-form approach—capturing all of their ragged glory and providing at least a hint of the hypnotic impact their concerts have become known for. Certainly fans will find this a welcome addition to their library but even first-timers might be swept away by the band's deceptively simple rhythms, plaintive guitar solos, and earthy, chant-like vocal refrains.

— By Ian Menzies

## Varttina

Viena (Westpark Music)



More than 30 years on, Varttina continues to make top-notch Finnish folk in

their own inimitable style. Inspired by a series of trips they recently made to the Viena Karelian folkloric villages that lie just across their shared border with Russia, the group decided it was time to revisit their deepest musical roots.

The Viena region is the "single richest source of the folk poetry found in *The Kavevala*," a 19th-century work of epic Finnish poetry that was cited by J.R.R. Tolkien as one of his inspirations for *The Lord of the Rings* (a fact

that explains the logic behind A.R. Raham enlisting the 'Vartts' to help him compose music for the hugely successful live musical version of the trilogy, which premiered right here in Canada a decade ago).

The album combines reworkings of some of these ancient song poems, along with a selection of the band's original compositions, but it's the traditional arrangements that really shine through, most notably their a cappella reading of *Raijan Yoiku*, which brings vocalists Mari Kaasinen, Susan Aho, and Karolina Kantelinen's incredibly tight and angular vocal polyphony fully to the fore.

— By Ian Menzies

## The Cactus Blossoms

You're Dreaming (Red House Records)



The Cactus Blossoms' debut disc is a strong collection of

country-pop songs with harmonies in the Americana vein of The Everly Brothers or Buddy Holly. The vocalists are main songwriter and electric guitarist Jack Torrey and acoustic guitar player and vocalist Page Burkum (who also gets writing credit on one track). They're backed by a few other fine musicians, most notably very tight drummer and recording engineer Alex Hall and producer/guitarist JD McPherson. It's a very strong debut and their lyric writing sticks in the mind.

*Spotlight Kisses*, *You're Dreaming*, *Clown Collector*, and *Adios Maria* are all tracks that could easily make it on the radio. A small example would be: "I'm painting my jealousy / My hands are shaking, my brush is slipping / And the red paint's dripping to the floor / Rose petals are all I need / Just like picking cotton it can make you bleed".

The remaining tracks are all perfectly serviceable as well. It's an impressive accomplishment by these boys from St. Paul, MN.

— By Barry Hammond







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## Kathleen Ivaluarjuk Merritt

Ivaluarjuk: Ice, Lines  
and Seal Skins (Independent)



Described by the artist herself as a "celebration of life and identity",

Kathleen Ivaluarjuk Merritt's new album is certainly a unique and highly personal artistic statement. The Rankin Inlet throat singer possesses a powerful vocal instrument, which, along with her usual duet partner Marie Belleau, dominates a good deal of this 11-song offering.

Wrapped up in a beautifully artistic package, the CD features an idiosyncratic mix of Inuit and Irish/Celtic influences, each coming from one side of Merritt's bi-continental family tree. These traditions achieve their most satisfying intermingling on songs like *Taanisirutik (The Song To Dance To)* and *Sim's Jig* but, as mentioned, it is ultimately the Arctic influence that carries the day, providing a consistent through line for the entire album.

Working with more than a dozen Nunavut musicians (most notably producer, multi-instrumentalist, and frequent arranger Chris Coleman, and her Iqaluit neighbours The Jerry Cans), Ms. Merritt has created an absorbing listen on this, her solo artist debut.

— By Ian Menzies

## Laurie Lewis & the Right Hands

The Hazel and Alice Sessions (Hearth Music)



Today there are many great female players and singers among the big

hats but back in the 1960s, few women dared to play bluegrass. In the male-dominated world of bluegrass music, Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard were true trailblazers, playing hardcore, in-your-face bluegrass with the best of them.

Laurie Lewis, who has done her own share of blazing trails over the past three decades, was very

much inspired by these women and has put together the ultimate tribute album. This album is not just a great opportunity for many to discover the music of Gerrard and Dickens, the latter of whom died five years ago. It's also a chance for many to hear the great dynamic voice of Laurie Lewis and longtime band members such as Tom Rozum doing what they do best, making bluegrass that is both contemporary and steeped in roots. And the vocal combination of Rozum and Lewis is magical, as well as the pickin'.

Lewis gets some high-powered help from the likes of Aiofe O'Donovan of Crooked Still, Linda Ronstadt on the a cappella duet of *Pretty Bird* that closes out the album, and even Gerrard herself on *Working Girl Blues* (Lewis produced Gerrard's 2013 album). This a must for bluegrass aficionados and anyone who has interest in American roots music.

— By Mike Sadava

## The Small Glories

Wondrous Traveler (Independent)



If you're going to cut Billy Bragg at his own game, you'd better

know what you're doing. Musical vagabonds Cara Luft and JD Edwards have long known what's up, both in their solo jaunts and now in their newest collaborative venture, *The Small Glories*.

The Bragg track they cover is *Way Over Yonder in the Minor Key*, from the collection of Woody Guthrie co-writes that Bragg did with Wilco, and they nail it. While Bragg's version is thoughtful and sly in its boastfulness, *The Small Glories* up the energy a few notches and go for full, clattering band stomp.

They mix in a sweet cover of fellow Winnipegger Greg MacPherson's *1,000 Stars* with a scattering of Luft and Edwards originals (Luft's *Something To Hold Onto* is particularly notable), traditionals (*Wondrous Traveler*) plus a few co-writes between the two,

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layering their own banjo, guitar, and harmonica among guest bass, piano, accordion, and violin turns from a number of friends.

Whether it turns out to be an excellent one-off or the start of even greater musical accomplishments, *Wondrous Traveler* is well worth your investment.

— By Tom Murray

## Martin Harley & Daniel Kimbro

Live at Southern Ground (Del Mundo Records)



This isn't a live album in the way that you think. It's live in the sense

of two musicians playing together, no overdubs or added tracks.

There's less audience noise than you'd expect from a live album, as in none at all. There's more effect than we'd expect to hear on a live album, at least on one that wasn't recorded in the '80s. They say that it was recorded in a "handful of hours" within a single day.

Um, OK. I'm not sure why it matters one way or the other. It's not a race, but if you need a stopwatch, fair enough.

Martin Harley is a Dobro player, and he has the kind of voice we'd associate with the Avett Brothers, were we inclined to do so. Thin, forward, requiring a pretty face to come out of. Daniel Kimbro plays bass and adds a strikingly sympathetic backing vocal.

So, yes, there's a bit of bravado here, though it doesn't take long to really get on board. Harley's playing is delicate, tasteful, and beautifully rich, restrained even when he ventures into rocking-out territory. Kimbro's upright bass is gorgeous and full. At times he uses a bow, which is a nice touch.

Between that and the vocals, there are moments when it feels like someone else has stepped into the mix, but they haven't. It's just the two guys, and their ability to move between moods and feels is a testament to the quality of the arrangements.

There are some covers here, including a slow take on Lead



Belly's *Goodnight Irene*. It's like a porch swing on a hot summer's day. Bees buzzing, all of that. It's lovely.

There's also a lovely take on Tom Waits's *Chocolate Jesus*. As such, Harley and Kimbro make some connections that are as welcome as they are surprising. *Automatic Life* is one of those songs that you can get stuck on in the car, which is a great place to listen to this album, actually. It's a great accompaniment to staring at the horizon, thinking about where you've been and where you're going. And then the song ends and, in that quiet moment between tracks, you realize that you haven't got a clue.

— By Glen Herbert

## Andy White

How Things Are (Loudenproud Records)



I've been a fan since I first heard *Religious Persuasion* oh so many years

ago—1986, I think. Mr. White has assembled quite a career. Fifteen solo albums. Two books of poetry. One novel. Plus two albums with Stephen Fearing as Fearing & White and two albums with ALT (Andy, Liam O Maolnai, and Tim Finn).

Well, he's still at it and *How Things Are* is a welcome addition to his body of work. Not break-

ing any new ground, Mr. White delivers a few gems, a substantial number of really good songs, and a few throwaway pop tunes.

Standouts include *Shakespeare Take My Hand* and *Who Said We're Gonna Get Another Lennon*.

"Come on Shakespeare take my hand / Guide my pen across the page / I need your help for her to understand / And dance my way across the stage"

"Who said we're gonna get another Lennon / Well I don't know about that / Has anyone seen Dylan / He quit when Elvis got fat"

*How Things Are* answers the question, "how are things?" in the imitable style of Andy White.

— By les siemieniuk

## The Bills

Trail of Tales (Borealis Records)



It seems to happen to all sorts of folk bands over time. Trans-

mogrification. Steeleye Span mutated into The Wombles, Spirit of the West almost became The Wonder Stuff, Great Big Sea started to sound like Counting Crows, and now The Bills have apparently turned into The Barenaked Ladies. OK, I admit I might be overstating my case, but I'm sure the more observant among you will get my drift. There are all the usual Bills trademarks in abundance here, including highly polished vocal harmonies, virtuoso playing, and squeaky-clean production, but there's also an unmistakably quirky pop music feel to this set.

The current lineup is Marc Atkinson on mandolin, guitar, percussion, vocals; Adrian Dolan on fiddle, accordion, piano, vocals; Chris Frye on guitar, vocals; Richard Moody on violin, viola, mandolin, vocals; and Scott White on upright bass, vocals. They all contribute to the composing and writing of the 14 songs on offer here, which are, as always, infused with folk, jazz, classical, and world music influences and motifs. The acoustic instrumentation ensures that there's still a very rootsy aspect to the music, but the





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thing that caught my ear was the jaunty, singalong feel of much of *Trail of Tales*.

*Happy Be, Hittin' the Do*, and *Jungle Doctor* are three cardinal examples of this poppier sound. So, the final verdict? Some old fans may not like it so much as the golden oldies, some new fans will be won. Me? I say come on lads, let's go the whole hog. It's time to plug in and pop out!

— By Tim Readman

### Rob Currie

Take Me Back (Independent)



Atlantic Canada singer/songwriter Rob Currie, leader of the popu-

lar Halifax traditional band The Cornerboys, released his first solo album, *This Gentlest Country*, in 2003 and has now followed up with his long-awaited second album, *Take Me Back*. Known for his strong lyrics and ability to absorb traditional folk, pop, and even gospel idioms into his compositions, he has sometimes been compared to Stan Rogers and Christy Moore.

Currie fans are well rewarded with this release of new and older material on 11 tracks that include love songs, murder ballads, contemplative songs, and songs of social injustice, most of them with a Maritimes flavour.

*Take Me Back* opens with *This Old River*, a song of longing for the Miramichi River by a river expatriate. This is followed by the playful ballad *Blackamutt Jack*, written by Jim Maxwell, that tells the love story of a chimney sweep. Next is *Eastern Girl*, an homage to a girl from St. John's, NL, and *Never Enough*, tales about aspirations just out of reach.

The heavyweight track is *Romeo*, about Romeo Phillion, who was released from prison after serving 31 years for a murder he did not commit. The remaining songs on the album are equally as strong and enjoyable, including the delightful a cappella arrangement of the traditional song *Your*

*Old Shipmate*.

— By Gene Wilburn

### Steve Coffey

Paint Songs (Independent)



Prairie born and raised, Steve Coffey has, like Joni Mitchell, lived

the dual life of a visual artist and a singer/songwriter. With several albums under his belt as Steve Coffey and the Lokels, and another two as part of The Kitchen Boys, Coffey has released *Paint Songs*, an album that combines his visual art with his musical art. As a painter, Coffey's work has been displayed in numerous galleries and salons, and some of his latest paintings are featured in the booklet that forms the CD package.

Each of the 13 paintings is paired with a song from the album and, although it doesn't tell in which order they were created, I suspect the paintings came first and the songs were created to accompany them. Most of the paintings glow with bright colours and thick brush strokes and are thoughtful and visually arresting.

This is an ambitious project, and the music on the CD is supported with strong performances from the session musicians. My favourite track may be *Sundogs*, with a matching painting of stylistic sundog filling the sky.

— By Gene Wilburn

### 3hattrio

Dark Desert Night (Okehdokee Records)



Dubbing themselves as American desert music might put them

sonically at odds with other such self-classifiers as Kyuss (California desert) and Giant Sand (Arizona desert), but Utah-based 3hattrio actually do evoke a similar feel for open spaces as their stoner and alt-rock brethren.

Their sound is a veritable bouillabaisse of roots influences, from the darkest Appalachia to Western film soundtracks, traditional folk



from the Harry Smith canon to droning Irish balladry. Nothing holds still long enough for easy identification but that's a good thing; *White Pressing Down* contains a hint of late '90s Nick Cave circa *The Boatman's Call*, *Get on the Bus* is a lazy, lulling lament sung plaintively by guitarist Greg Istock. Woozy and mordant, *Dark Desert Night* is definitely not a Saturday night party record, more like an early Sunday morning facing of the facts.

— By Tom Murray

## Low Card

Follow Me Down (MRC Records)



To hear Lou Card's third release, *Follow Me Down*, you'd

be hard-pressed to peg him for an Austin-based, mandolin-for-hire, ex-Tennessean. This delightful collision of roots musics—country to blues, among other things—presents an up-tempo selection of originals (save the Earl Poole Ball-driven Norman Blake cover *Southern Railroad Blues*) that project an intriguing amalgam of John Prine and Geoff Muldaur.

Card presents a warm vocal style that teases its party potential while suggesting a real-world sense of humour. That's why you may hear Prine in Card's *Do My Own Thing* while the sturdy drums of Josh Vernier, the bright guitar lines of Doug Strahan, and the haunting harmonica of Benito (Ace) Acevedo drive things home.

You hear Prine again on *Gone Back Home*, kept buoyant by Poole's B3 and a rare turn by Card on mandolin. The perky *Come On Up* splits vocal duties with Nate Mayes as Jonny Grossman's accordion and Vernier's beefy drums command attention, Card's contribution conjuring no less than Ray Davies.

So many strong, sturdy originals suggest Card's considerable skills as a songwriter and arranger, with highlights such as the exceptional *30 Pieces* and *Paradise*, both benefiting from Card's quirky reliance



on his Tijuana Trainwreck Horns. With *Paradise*, the complementary vocals of Melissa Carper work to mellow Card's own whiskyed rasp. The guitar work of Doug Strahan becomes each song's bright light yet it's Card's playful approach to creating a 'good time vibe' that convincingly seals the deal.

— By Eric Thom

## The Infamous Stringdusters

Ladies & Gentlemen (Compass)



If it sounds like the five musicians that comprise The Infamous

Stringdusters are telepathically linked, the fact *Ladies & Gentlemen* is their seventh album attests to prodigious tendencies all around. Founded by Berklee School of Music bluegrass hotshots—I'll resist their self-description of "new-grass jam band", thanks all the same—the band expands the intricate harmony and meticulous execution of traditional bluegrass (with banjo, fiddle, Dobro, bass, and guitar) to a fluid and flexible acoustic Americana.

The masterstroke is inviting a procession of female artists to vo-

calize and play on their tunes and, man, do the Stringdusters have some impressive friends—Joan Osborne, Lee Ann Womack, Mary Chapin Carpenter, and Nickel Creek's Sara Watkins, for example. The playing is simultaneously tasteful and smokin' throughout, falling perfectly behind each guest performer with the possible exception of Joss Stone, whose breathy soul affectations don't sit so well over top of the effortless swing of the players.

— By Scott Lingley

## Joe Ely

Panhandle Rambler (Rack'em Records)



The panhandle of the title is the Texan one, not the Floridian, and the album comprises something of a tour of the writers and the styles that we associate with the singer/songwriter culture of Texas. All but two of the songs were written by Ely, though they reference many others, including Roy Orbison, Waylon Jennings, and Guy Clark.

There are two covers, a nice take on Clark's *Magdalene* as well as Butch Hancock's *When the Nights Are Cold*. Ely doesn't

bring anything particularly new to either, and both serve as reminders of how great the originals were. Which, perhaps, is partially the intent.

Ely has said that he was surprised at how many minor keys he used here on the songs that he wrote for the album. It's darker than we expect out of Texas, perhaps, and light years away from smiles and winks of Bob Wills. This album isn't folk, or rock, or country, but a conflation of them all. But it's the songwriting that, rightly, pulls the focus.

— By Glen Herbert







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## Poor Nameless Boy

Bravery (Chronograph Records)



What a great stage name: Poor Nameless Boy. Seems he understands the

nuances of the business, we like to call show. An artistic pseudonym delivers a multitude of creative and personal advantages and PNB delivers in *Bravery*, a terrific record.

Hailing from Regina, SK, his real name is Joel Henderson and he is blessed with a wonderful, wistful-sounding voice that suits perfectly his alt-folk/pop sensibility, and the 10 songs in this collection (his third) are delivered with style and panache.

Songs of the wounded, songs of the melancholy, songs of life. Joel has created a lovely merging of music and words—the best presentation of the singer/songwriter moniker.

Throughout, the production features tasty use of violin amongst simple guitar, drums, and bass, but the predominate memory that lingers, long after, is that lovely, unique, and haunting voice.

It's time for the Poor Nameless Boy to get out on the road and make a name for himself. Shouldn't be a problem—he's a good 'un.

— By les siemieniuk

## Tony Turner

Love and Other Attractions (Independent)



Tony Turner has no love for Stephen Harper but he has enough love in

his heart to write a whole album about it. The Ottawa resident achieved his moment of doubt and fame last year after being suspended from his day job as a government scientist for putting his song, *Harperman*, on YouTube. That earned his song two million hits, and a Spirit of Folk award from this year's Folk Alliance.

There's nothing about our former beloved leader on Turner's third disc but a lot about finding love,



losing love, being in love, and recovering from love. From the chest-thumping, alley-cat, back-door man in *Way I Roll* to the fading elderly man pleading with his wife to *Love Me As I Am*, Turner covers a wide range of emotions associated with aplomb, occasionally with zingers. “*I’ve lost my way, you lost your pearls. No there ain’t no jewels to be found,*” he sings on *Chinatown*.

He ends the album with a different kind of love: his enduring affair with the Fab Four on *The Beatles Changed Everything*.

Full disclosure: I occasionally back Turner up when he is out West. But I’ve always found his baritone, which could be compared to Tom Russell’s, easy to listen to. Special kudos to Keith Glass, who produced and played umpteen instruments on this album, for bringing out the best in these tunes.

— By Mike Sadava

## Battlefield Band and 12 Special Guests

Beg & Borrow... (Temple Records)



The 2016 Battlefield Band lineup is Mike Katz (pipes, whistles, vocals); Alasdair White (fiddle, whistle, vocals), and Sean O'Donnell (guitar, vocals). As the title suggest, this CD features these venerable legends of Scottish music alongside 12 special guests.

Together they explore music that has been begged, stolen, and borrowed by and from both the Scottish and Irish traditions. The resulting 18 tracks demonstrate the richness of that shared musical history with a feast of songs, reels, strathspeys, marches, airs, hornpipes, and jigs. The 12 special guests include Christine Primrose (vocals); Alison Kinnaird (harp, cello); Jim Kilpatrick (drums); John Martin (fiddle); Mike Whelans (harmonica); Nuala Kennedy (vocals, flute); Leo McCann (melodeon); Aaron Jones (vocals, bouzouki); Barry Gray (pipes); Robin Morton (vocals, bodhran); Don Meade (harmonica); and Tony DeMarco (fiddle). OK, now you know the lineup, check out the music. As you'd expect, it's grand!

— By Tim Readman

## David Francey

Empty Train (Laker Music)



OK, let's get this going. Reviews like this are the hardest to write. For Mr. Francey, in 15 years or so, this is album No. 12, including two collaborations, five junos nominations with three wins, a couple of toppings of the *Penguin Eggs* annual poll for best album of the year, and nothing but praise and admiration along the way from his audience and his musical peers.

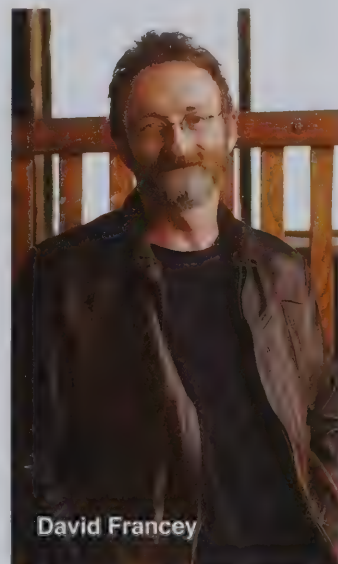
I submit Mr. Francey has now

earned a stature in the world of “folk” music, where: does anyone who has encountered his music really care anymore what a reviewer says?

I don't want to gush and rave on and on...but that's all I can do. He's the real deal, an artist in his prime and each work stands on very high ground.

Empty Train. I think not. The train is jammed full of intriguing, memorable characters. Such as the Simon & Garfunkel *America* protagonists “playing games with the faces” of their fellow passengers, David has created 12 biographical gems of strangers and family.

I still marvel after all these years at his jeweler's precision in cutting and polishing his language so perfectly that there is not a wasted word. The longest song is





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3:41, the shortest is 50 seconds, yet they all inform a novel's worth of layered story.

Singling out just one, in *Hospital*, David writes: "My father lies on a tilted bed / Spends the hours inside his head / Dreams the dreams of a travelling man / From the living world and back again / When he's awake he's sore and tired / In a world of needles, tubes and wires / He's Lazerus, returned again / To another day of much the same."

Besides being lyrically well spoken, *Empty Train* is produced and arranged with skill and great musical taste by two of his band mates, Mark Westberg and Chris Coole, creating a lovely acoustic mood that suits his voice and words.

So if you're a fan, this album is as good as anything David Francey has done. If his name is unfamiliar, let this be a wonderful introduction to a man whose music you will love to experience.

— By les siemieniuk

### Robbie Fulks

Upland Stories (Bloodshot Records)



With a dozen albums to his credit, Fulks, does not let off on the alt.country gas pedal on his latest release. Following his success with *Gone Away Backward* (2013), *Upland Stories* is a 12-track collection of some of the most enjoyable tales of the American experience you will

hear this year.

Fulks's exceptional talent can be traced back to his early days playing with the bluegrass band The Special Consensus, where his distinctive guitar styling was showcased on their 1989 Grammy-nominated album *Hole In My Heart*.

Musically, *Upland Stories* is stacked with well-crafted country bluegrass instrumentation, as in the love song *Katy Kay* or in Auney Peg's *New Old Man*, where he honors his banjo idol, Earl Scruggs. At its lyrical essence, *Upland Stories* is folk! *South Bend Soldiers On* tells of a transitioning Chicago neighbourhood, and *Needed* is a loving tribute to those he holds dear. A great listen all round!

— By Phil Harries

### Terry Morrison and John Gorham

First Waltz (Independent)



Sometimes when a couple has been together for long enough they

finish each other's sentences. John Gorham and Terry Morrison, who are longtime partners in life as well as music, are becoming one of those couples.

They've each had long, successful careers as singer/songwriters in Edmonton, in solo projects as well as being members of different bands. This is their first album together, and hopefully the first of many more to come. They are perfect foils for each other, Gorham with his friendly, gravelly voice, Morrison with her rich, jazz-inflected set of pipes, and both with their timeless poignant tunes that pay great respect to the past times in Alberta. And yes, they occasionally finish each other's verses in duets.

The album is full of old-fashioned charm in songs such as Gorham's *Off To Join the World*, all about joining the circus, and Morrison's *1942*, which is a young woman's perspective of about living during the Second World War, in Edmonton, which was a staging ground. There are no less than three waltzes on this disc, as well as a couple



Robbie Fulks



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of well-chosen covers, including Ford Piers's *Great Western*, one of the great Canadian songs.

With a host of their Edmonton musical friends and producer Stephen Fearing providing backup, they have created something that is larger than the sum of the parts.

– By Mike Sadava

## Martin Newell with The Hosepipe Band

The Song of the Waterlily & Black Shuck

(Independent)



This is a wonderfully English collaboration, featuring Martin Newell,

an award-winning North Essex poet, and a stalwart East Anglian ceilidh band. Together they tackle two of Newell's poems: *The Song of the Waterlily* and the epic *Black Shuck*.

*The Song of the Waterlily* describes the building and sailing of a traditional Essex deep-sea fishing smack, "from tree to sea". *Black Shuck* is about the sinister ghostly dog, which is said to have haunted the eerie East Anglian fens, broads, and wetlands since Viking times. Following the phantom dog's tracks through the half-forgotten misty lanes of North Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk, the poem seeks to capture some of the dark mystery of this largely unsung part of southeastern England. The poetry is evocative and moving while the music supports it perfectly and punctuates each transition from passage to passage. Highly recommended.

– By Tim Readman

## Waco Brothers

Going Down In History (Bloodshot Records)



Chicago's Waco Brothers is a five-piece band comprising Dean

Schlabowske and Joe Camarillo, from Dollar Store, and three British expats: Jon Langford of the '70s British punk band The Mekons, and Tracey Dear and Alan Doughty of Jesus Jones. Waco



Brothers began in the mid-'90s as a raucous live country band in Chicago's budding country scene. *Going Down In History* is their eleventh release and their first formal studio album since 2005's *Freedom and Weep*.

The Waco Brothers are to country-punk music as aging gracefully is to marriage—it's a beautiful thing! *Going Down In History* is the perfect soundtrack for the seasoned punkers of the 1980s. Huge smatterings of country and first-wave garage band rip through the 10-track album. The Waco Brothers' signature innovative "Cash-meets-Clash" sound is alive and well! Starting with the rowdy *DYIBYOB*, to the rhythmic T.Rex-Bo Diddly inspired *Building Our Own Prison*, and back to the *Devil's Day* will take you back to your glory days.

With age comes personal and social insight and the title track *Going Down In History* and *Orphan Song* are humorous and perceptive rally cries of hope and longevity. *Going Down In History* rocks!

– By Phil Harries

## Freakwater

Scheherazade (Bloodshot Records)



Not exactly a household name Freakwater, but they have delivered their unique style of bluegrass, blues, folk, and country for almost 30 years. The trio consists of longtime collaborators Janet Bean and Catherine Irwin, bolstered by the sophisticated bass playing of Dave Gay. *Scheherazade* is their eighth album and first in more than 10 years. And it's a 12-track

modern Appalachian fusion of vocal harmonies and bluegrass storytelling.

Scheherazade was the legendary Persian Sassanid king's wife who, by weaving stories, managed to spare her life and win the love of her king after *A Thousand and One Nights*. Freakwater, with Bean's and Irwin's ethereal vocals, individually and collectively intertwine like the stories of the album's namesake.

The balance between the harmonies and haunting musical arrangements of banjos, guitars, flute, and string instruments from other contributors are marvelously captivating. Ultimately, *Scheherazade* is an evocative and moving resonance of post-modern traditional Kentucky Appalachian heart.

– By Phil Harries

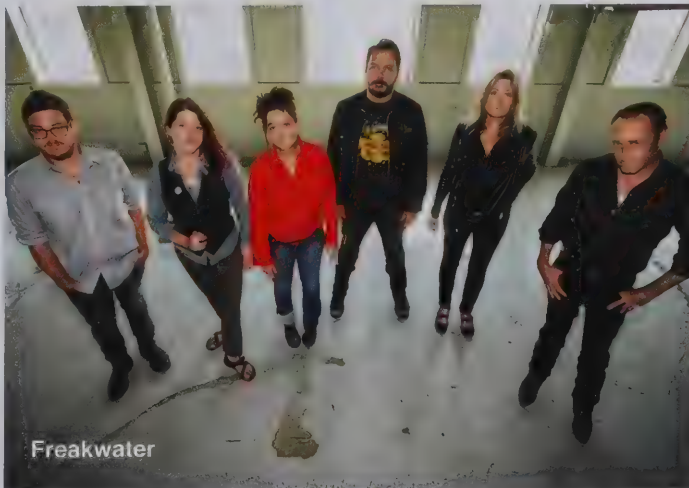
## Justine Vandergrift

Sailor (Independent)



Justine Vandergrift obviously writes from the heart. This nine-song disc is dripping

with emotion—a lot of pain and regret from ended relationships and, as she says in her liner notes, the brightening sky of self discovery. At the end, she sings: "I won't say I'm sorry for singing songs like this ... sweet sad songs, why must you persist?"





Vandergrift, a young up-and-coming songwriter from Edmonton, is blessed with a rich voice sometimes reminiscent of that of fellow Albertan Colleen Brown, which is indeed a compliment.

This album is nicely recorded live off the floor by Harry Gregg and features a fine cast of local singers and instrumentalists such as Joe Nolan, Dana Wylie, Nathan Burns, and the list goes on. My favourite tracks are the most stripped down, such as the haunting *Demons of Desire* where she is accompanied only by Smokey Fennel's steel guitar, and *5 A.M.*, which features Bob Tildesley's muted trumpet. Vandergrift definitely has the strength to carry it off with very sparse backup.

— By Mike Sadava

## Trent Severn

Trillium (Independent)



Trent Severn consists of Dana Manning, Laura C Bates, and Emm

Gryner. They sing like they belong together. In their second effort as a band, Trent Severn deliver a rollicking good listen entitled *Trillium*, their sophomore effort.

If I'm not mistaken, the trillium is the emblem and official flower of Ontario and a fitting title for work from a band that wears its Canadian roots openly and proudly.

It opens with a catchy, toe-tapping song about maple syrup—that's as Canadian as it gets.



I love what Trent Severn is doing here. They do it with lovely harmonies, they do it with musical aplomb, and they do it very, very well. Good on ya, Laura, Emm, and Dana. I look forward to more as you grow.

— By les siemieniuk

## Matt Patershuk

*I Was So Fond Of You* Black Hen



Patershuk, who calls LaGlace, AB, home, reteams with guitarist/

producer Steve Dawson for the followup to 2013's *Outside the Lights of Town*, recorded at Dawson's new Nashville digs. Whatever has changed about Dawson's facilities, the trademark intimacy and warmth of his prior work turns

up here, setting Patershuk's dusky baritone against spare but tasty arrangements with fiddle, banjo, and the producer's Swiss Army knife-like versatility with stringed things.

Good country music's preoccupation with heartbreak is on abundant display here, but the album gains extra heft from the mournful title track, dedicated to the sister Patershuk lost tragically in 2013, while *Mean Coyotes*, wafting on accordion and Dawson's piercing Weissenborn asides, embodies a Prairie bleakness that still somehow manages to be pretty.

*Prettiest Ones* is a singer/songwriter's homage to the power of his chosen vehicle, foregoing cheesy namechecking for a thoughtful evocation of the feelings music draws out and

nurtures. If you're looking for a record to curl up with at the weary end of the day, *I Was So Fond Of You* readily fits the bill.

— By Scott Lingley

## Nuallan

Piping from Cape Breton Island (Independent)



Nuallan are the Piping Ensemble of Cape Breton's Gaelic College, formed

to perform the Gaelic-dance style of piping originally brought to the Island and northeastern Nova Scotia by Scots Highland settlers. Three pipers—Keith MacDonald, Kevin Dugas, and Kenneth MacKenzie—form the nucleus of the group with accompaniment coming from piano, guitar, and drums. High energy step dancing further



enhances their performances.

The result is an exuberant collection of jigs, reels, strathspeys, and marches tied to and propelled by the rhythm of the dance. There's also one Gaelic song, accompanied by pipes to great effect. This EP brings a massive blast of Cape Breton's Gaelic culture hurtling into your living room. What else is there to be done than get rid of the furniture, roll up the rug, and have a party?!

— By Tim Readman

## Matt Flinner Trio

Traveling Roots (Compass)



Take three instruments traditionally employed in the service of

bluegrass but use them to play a melange of newgrass, be bop, counterpoint—and even some Middle Eastern sounding stuff—and you get the point of the Matt Flinner Trio.

This trio, featuring Flinner on mandolin, Eric Thorin on bass, and guitarist Ross Martin, is carving out its own niche in the expanding universe of string music. For the past decade, they've been travelling the continent, doing what they call Music du Jour, where somebody composes a piece during the day, they learn it, and then perform it that night. Phew. That's all I've got to say.

The result is that they are entering new realms of what their instruments can do together. I'm especially impressed with the way they occasionally use a complex chord structure with a simple melody, totally changing its impact.

While Flinner is the best known in the world of acoustic instrumental music, having toured and recorded with the likes of Steve Martin, the Nashville Chamber Orchestra, and Leftover Salmon. Thorin and Clark are no slouches, and the compositions are spread around among the three.

The tunes are complex and don't reach out and grab you right away, but give this album time. It's well worth it.

— By Mike Sadava

## The Pines

Above the Prairie (Red House Records)



I am a Prairie boy and my soul was forged in the influence of wide-open

spaces and the melancholy that comes with living in an environment dominated by the landscape, even in the heart of town. Perhaps that's why bands such as The Pines quickly go straight to my heart and lodge there.

*Above the Prairie* is stunning to listen to and experience, with stellar songs such as *Where Something Wild Still Grows*.



Originally from Iowa and now based in Minneapolis, The Pines wear their mid-west sensibility on their sleeves, crafting the most beautiful songs.

David Huckfelt and Benson Ramsey are the core of The Pines and are joined by Benson's brother, Alex Ramsey, on keyboards, James Buckley on bass, and drummer J.T. Bates. Produced impeccably with help of Bo Ramsay, this album is as good as it gets. It hits all the right notes, musically and lyrically. The songs draw you in and keep you there. Not a misstep in the bunch.

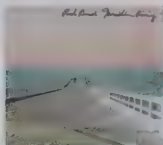
They are also joined by a terrific list of guest performers, featuring Greg Brown, Iris DeMent, Pieta Brown, the late John Trudell, and Quiltman.

In the world of roots music, alt-country, Americana, folk—what ever you want to call it—*Above the Prairie* is a stunning achievement and the best thing I have heard in a long time.

— By les siemienuik

## Paul Burch

Meridian Rising (Plowboy Records)



A veteran recording artist since the 1990s, Paul Burch has something like 11 other discs to his credit and his music has appeared in such varied places as HBO's *True Blood*, Disney's *The Rookies* and

David Cronenberg's *A History Of Violence*. His latest effort is a musical biography of Jimmie Rodgers (*The Blue Yodeller*), using the instruments and rhythms that Rodgers would have heard during his lifetime—blues, country, jazz, ragtime, minstrel show, and fusions of all these.

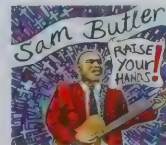
As usual on his discs, there are great players combined under the titles of The WPA Ballclub and The Meridian Rising Players, such as: Dennis Crouch, Jen Gunderman, Fats Kaplan, Jon Langford, Tim O'Brien, and many others.

If you like a vintage musical stew with terrific playing and classic lyrics, this is a disc for you. There are 20 tracks to choose from and not really a dud in the lot. Outstanding singing and playing by an artist like no other.

— By Barry Hammond

## Sam Butler

Raise Your Hands! (Savem Records)



This is an exciting release for fans of gospel and blues with

bite, alike. Butler, known for his sizeable role in the Blind Boys of Alabama as one-time rhythm guitarist and second lead vocalist, breaks fresh ground placing his big beefy baritone atop a crack band that hits hard with a blues-rock bite. By covering a ballsy set of gospel songs written by people





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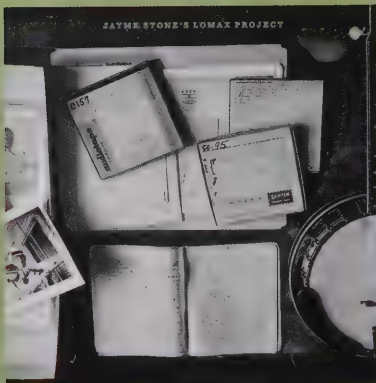
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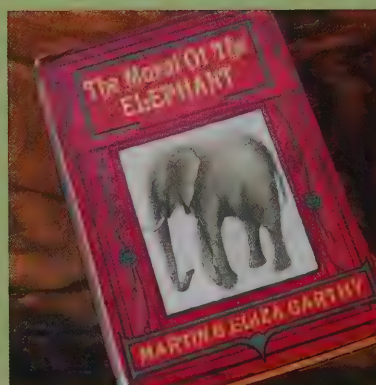
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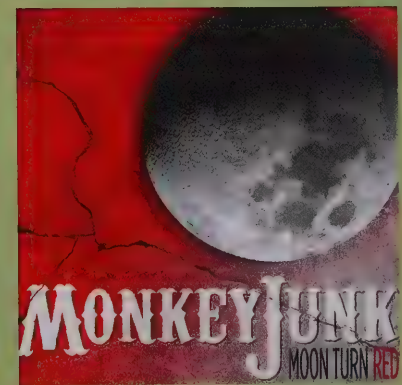
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you'd never even associate with the genre, you've got a winning combination that's stronger together than the individual pieces would be apart.

Think of the contrast established between vocalist Andre Williams and his ragged, rocking R&B backup—except that Butler's voice is silky smooth by comparison. It's the scrawling, boiling brew established by his band—featuring the sinewy bass of Viktor Krauss, the lethal pedal steel of Sacred Steel's Roosevelt Collier, the multi-dimensional drums of Marco Giovini, and Butler's own ferocious contributions on guitar—that serve up such a menacing contrast to Butler's soft, breathy vocals that help each song hit its mark.

Butler can wail like a bull moose or soulfully soften things down like so much baby oil. Cue up the album's finest track, Blind Faith's *In The Presence of the Lord*, and prepare to be bowled over by something quite achingly beautiful.

A hell-raising release from a God-fearing force field of a band.

— By Eric Thom

## Sierra Hull

Weighted Mind (Rounder Records)



Sierra Hull has long been worth our attention, even at a tender

age. Here she uses the light, clean touch on both mandolin and vocals that we associate with Chris Thile, creating music that's made with the delicacy that a microphone can afford. On the title track, Hull shifts between muddy and clean, using all the paints in the box, though it's still very close music, full of all the dissonance and complexity that has become Thile's signature sound.

On *Stranded* and *Queen of Hearts/Royal Tea*, Hull also writes with the autobiographical tone that Thile does so well. Or, if we're being totally honest, better.

The seduction of what Thile has done throughout his career is



apparent, and mandolin players perhaps find that seduction hard to resist. On this album, thought, the best tracks are the ones where Hull remains closer to her own persona, or at least the persona that she's presented in her music in the past. *Lullaby* uses a more familiar structure, one that allows her to deploy her voice to its best effect.

One of the best things I've heard from Hull in the last while is her duet with Mac Wiseman on *You're a Flower Blooming in the Wildwood*, released in 2014. There her playing is adept, sympathet-

ic, and entirely authentic. She's supporting Wiseman, and while her playing and singing there won't thrill a Vegas audience, it does thrill a listener who knows what she's doing. Her solo is straightforward and, in it is the economy that exposes it for what it is: masterful. It's that authentic voice that I hoped to hear on this album. Instead, it feels like she's wrestling with someone else's persona rather than simply relaxing and being herself.

— By Glen Herbert

## Allison Brown

Stitches and Incisions (Independent)



London, ON's "two I's" Allison Brown, the singer/songwriter,

shouldn't be confused with "one I" Alison Brown, the American banjo whiz from Hartford, CT. Two I's Allison is a guitar player and singer, though her side man, Chris Crossroads, does take a funky, staggering banjo solo on her fine version of Butch Hancock's *Boxcars*. Allison has a good, strong voice, best showcased on this her fourth solo disc (after 2013's *Secret Identity*, 2010's *Viper At The Virgin's Feet*, and 2005's *Every-*

*thing That Shined*, and some group projects like *Antiques Freakshow*) on her bluesy version of Percy Mayfield's *Please Send Me Someone To Love*. Her own writing is probably best represented by the tracks *All Our Emergences*, about all the injuries humans routinely suffer (which contains the lines from which the title of the disc is taken), *Your Enemy*, and *Scavengers*, a song about people who make things out of scrap. It's a pleasant, if shortish, disc which gives a good overview of her talent (pick it up at the merch table at one of her shows!) and has fine players backing her up. Mention should be made of Bryan Wright's guitar playing on the Mayfield track. Nice stuff.

— By Barry Hammond

## Ben Miller & Anita MacDonald

A Day at the Lake (Independent)



This new duo has burst onto the traditional Gaelic music scene. The

combination of Miller's bagpipes and MacDonald's fiddle produces a closely woven and highly energetic sound that has grabbed people's attention everywhere they have performed.

The CD was recorded in one day, in a lodge on the shores of Lake George, in Miller's home county in upstate New York. The instrumental sets are a well-blended choice of tunes from old collections and manuscripts, well-known melodies learned by ear, and more contemporary pieces. There are also two Gaelic love songs, which are sung beautifully by Ms. MacDonald. The skilful backing band are Dominique Dodge (harp), Tristan Henderson (guitar, bouzouki), and Tyson Chen (piano). Anita also provides percussion in the form of step dancing on *Steppin' in the Garden*—which will be great to see in a live show. This is a very strong debut album of Scottish and Cape Breton music for the heart, head, and feet.

— By Tim Readman





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## Books

### The Chicken Came First

By Jay Aymar (Canoe Point Publishing)



Well, if you're going to try anything from this Sault Ste. Marie singer/songwriter

you may as well start with this collection, which contains a live CD and a book. You might raise an eyebrow at the \$40 price tag but, believe me, it's a bargain for what it contains. For your dough you get a beautifully recorded, live 12-song CD (of some of the best songs from his previous half-dozen releases) with his touring band plus guests, the sheet music for all those songs, a book with a selection of his blog stories, and some beautiful illustrations by artist and illustrator Pearl Rachinsky.

The disc is recorded and mixed by Chris Hess and Randy James in the Trinity Church and sounds great. The stories are mostly about touring but are well-written and all have broader implications about life. This critic's favourite is about his time as a lounge singer on a rule-bound cruise ship from Barcelona, a potentially soul-destroying gig where his sanity was saved by singing slave songs to an oblivious audience and the good

advice of a British comic about turning the shore trips to educational uses.

You'll feel like you know and like the man when you're done. Likewise, the one about hitting a deer while touring and the kindness he was met with by strangers. There are some great stories and songs here.

— By Barry Hammond

### Unprepared to Die

—America's greatest murder ballads and the true crime stories that inspired them

By Paul Slade (Soundcheck Books)



Paul Slade has written a well-researched and detailed account of eight murder ballads, which were written, collected, or popularized in the U.S.A. He covers classics of the genre such as *Stagger Lee*, *Knoxville Girl*, *Tom Dooley*, *Pretty Polly*, and *Frankie And Johnny*.

He follows the same formula for each song. First he gives an account of the actual murder story or stories on which the ballad is based. The link between the song and the homicide in question is sometimes clear and other times it is shrouded in the mists of folklore.

He then gives the provenance of the ballad—who wrote or collect-

ed it, where it first appeared (often in broadsheet or newspaper form), and who made it famous.

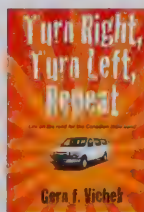
Finally, he lists his favourite versions, name checking everyone from Martin Carthy and Bob Dylan to Nick Cave and Beth Orton along the way. It all makes for intriguing as well as harrowing reading. Slade's passion for his subject matter is evident, in both his writing and in the painstaking detective work he conducted to get to the root of the murder and the song it spawned.

— By Tim Readman

### Turn Right, Turn Left, Repeat

By Gern f. Vlcek

ISBN: 978-1-55483-125-8 (Insomniac Press: \$19.95)



many indie bands, they were road warriors, traversing the provinces' highways from coast to coast many times over for a lot of years. Before that, he was a long-haul truck driver, so driving across the country is something he knows a fair bit about.

In this book he shares this hard-won road knowledge in a kind of how-to manual for aspiring

bands cum travel book/fast food restaurant guide/humorous war story compilation/as well as wry and informative commentary on the Canadian cultural and music scene/urban development history and much more.

Vlcek has an eye for the telling detail and while many of his opinions are subjective his unique and quirky humour and gregarious, thoughtful and even generous nature wins the reader over after only a few chapters.

You're quite willing to let him be your guide on the trip and listen to his opinions (whether you agree with them or not) on nearly everything under the sun. He's an entertaining storyteller and the chapters are short and punchy so even his rants aren't off-putting.

You find yourself giving consideration to pretty much everything he says even if it seems a little outlandish at first. His opinions on "believer clubs" (places that are the anchors of any music scene and a primer for how-to create a music scene) are well worth reading for musicians and fans alike and his tips on road etiquette invaluable.

These opinions are born of half a lifetime of experience and he knows what he's talking about when it comes to getting gigs, making deals, arranging accommodation, selling merchandise, working with sound men, getting gas and food, avoiding traffic snarls, and stretching a dollar to its farthest extent. It's a short course in touring run by one of the cool teachers. Anyone who doesn't learn something worth knowing hasn't been paying enough attention.

— By Barry Hammond







## Yann Falquet & Pascal Gemme

**Des membres de Genticorum se réinventent et impressionnent avec leurs reprises de thèmes traditionnels.**

**Par Yves Bernard**

Avec Genticorum, le chanteur-guitariste Yann Falquet et le violoneux-podorythmiste Pascal Gemme ont fait une partie du tour du monde en développant une sorte de classicisme sur les airs croches et même dans les chansons à répondre, comme une façon de raffiner le plus terreux et l'inverse. Ils explorent maintenant la formule du duo et dans le temps des fêtes, ils ont lancé *Princes et habitants*, un très beau disque de chansons folk et de musique traditionnelle

épurée. Ils font respirer les pièces et parviennent à ralentir le temps pour dégager toute la poésie qu'elles renferment.

« Au départ, je voulais que ce soit le disque de Yann et ses super arrangements de chansons », raconte Pascal. « Je voulais être celui qui met son projet en valeur. Je suis parti là-dessus et j'ai trouvé des tracks de violon pour accompagner. Mais Yann ne voulait pas que ce soit son disque ». Le duo avait fait quelques concerts et l'expérience s'était avérée concluante : « J'avais apporté quelques pièces sur lesquelles je travaillais dans les deux dernières années. J'ai commencé à faire plus de recherches de chansons pour moi-même, aller aux archives. J'ai reçu une bourse et j'ai mis plus de temps là-dessus. J'ai pu me construire un répertoire », explique Yann.

Avant la création de Genticorum en 2000, les deux jouaient déjà en duo en faisant la manche sur les trottoirs de la rue Saint-Denis à Mon-

tréal. À leur connaissance, l'aventure a duré un ou deux étés et ensemble, les deux larrons faisaient des airs de violon. À cette époque, les disques *La Saint-Berdondaine* d'Entourloupe et *La traversée de l'Atlantique* de la Bottine souriante se sont avérés de grandes inspirations pour eux. Pascal avait trouvé le goût du violon dans sa famille et jouait dès le plus bas âge. Chez lui, on mélangeait tout ce qu'on pouvait trouver dans la région d'Huntingdon en Montérégie : des airs irlandais et écossais, des tounes américaines, un peu de quadrille et même de la chanson populaire. Ce qui était bien différent de chez Yann qui ne vient pas d'une famille traditionnelle. Il a d'abord joué la clarinette dans une harmonie à l'école secondaire, avant d'opter pour la guitare, étudier le jazz et découvrir le trad.

Dans son art de l'accompagnement, il explore plusieurs accords ouverts : « Quand ça a cliqué avec la musique traditionnelle, j'ai rencontré Peter Senn, un guitariste de sessions irlandaises qui jouait quasiment tous les soirs. J'ai découvert que l'accompagnement venait avec un langage, un accordement ouvert «DADGAD». Après être passé par le jazz, c'était complètement rafraîchissant de redevenir comme un débutant. Et en tant qu'accompagnateur, t'as le pouvoir d'aller colorer les choses, sans avoir la responsabilité de ce qui se passe ».

De son côté, Pascal le violoneux peut jouer à l'ancienne, mais aussi intégrer plusieurs autres éléments. On a parfois l'impression que son archet flotte dans les airs, mais il peut aussi s'adapter à plusieurs pièces au développement progressif comme il le fait au sein de Genticorum : « C'est vrai, mais je pense que c'est la même chose pour Yann. On unifie toutes les musiques qu'on a écouté en restant très respectueux de la musique traditionnelle. J'ai joué du rock, du heavy métal, de la musique progressive et dans Genticorum, on ne se gêne pas pour mettre des couleurs. Et il y a ce côté violoneux que j'aime beaucoup. J'ai des sons que j'emprunte ailleurs : des ornements plus irlandais et des coups d'archet un peu old time, par exemple ». Louis «Pitou» Boudreault, Aimé Gagnon, André Alain et Jos Bouchard sont parmi les joueurs de violon qui l'ont le plus marqué.

Le disque *Princes et habitants* renferme le répertoire pour violon de Pascal et les chansons de Yann : « Lorsque j'ai eu ma bourse, je cherchais des chansons que je pouvais faire seul, un peu plus comme un chanteur folk que comme un chanteur de chansons à répondre », dit-il. « J'ai travaillé avec Ryan McGiver qui vient du milieu folk un peu irlandais et cela m'a beaucoup influencé. J'ai ensuite apporté à



Pascal des chansons qui ne sont pas nécessairement à répondre». Parfois, comme dans *Petit Jean pastouriau*, c'est la guitare, puis le violon qui donne les réponses, alors que dans *Les Habitants de Montréal*, on a ralenti la structure traditionnelle en intégrant aussi un texte surréaliste : « Les habitants de Montréal se sont fait faire un bâtiment. C'est pour aller jouer dedans. La coque du bâtiment, c'est le toit de l'Église Saint-Jean. Les trois mâts du bâtiment, c'est les ch'minées qui fument au vent ».

Et d'où viennent les princes du disque? « *Le Prince d'Orange* vient du répertoire de Marius Barbeau et le *Pince Eusèbe* est la pièce que Michel Faubert avait fait paraître sous le nom de «*Prince Eusèbe*», répond Yann. « Ces chansons m'ont toujours fasciné parce qu'elles ont un côté un peu médiéval européen. On parle de princes, alors qu'il n'y a pas de princes au Québec. C'est un peu dans l'esprit des vieilles balades anglaises qui m'ont beaucoup touché ». Ce que confirme Pascal en citant Martin Carthy et Dave Swarbrick : « Ce modèle a influencé la démarche du disque », dit-il.

Dans les chansons, Yann a composé les passages instrumentaux sur « des super mélodies et des thèmes impressionnistes » aux dires de Pascal. Pour les pièces instrumentales, le duo a repris une pièce du regretté violoneux franco-américain Wilson Langlois, un set de grondeuses, une composition intime de leur ami Jason Rosenblatt, une suite d'Hermas Rehel de la Gaspésie et d'Ira Leblanc du Nouveau-Brunswick, gra-

cieuseté du folkloriste Devon Léger. Un passage est consacré à Antoine Gauthier qui signe un cotillon et une galope : « Quand j'étais petit, j'haïssais le répertoire de quadrille pour mourir, mais j'en ai beaucoup joué depuis sept ou huit ans », confesse Pascal en riant.

À la fin du disque, le duo a regroupé plusieurs collaborateurs, dont Jason Rosenblatt, Marc Maziade, Laura Risk et Nathalie Haas. Une belle rencontre de famille.



Yann Falquet et Pascal Gemme

## Critiques

### Yann Falquet & Pascal Gemme

Princes et Habitants (Independent)



Yann Falquet et Pascal Gemme, deux des trois membres du groupe trad québécois Genticorum, ont sorti un album sublime intitulé *Princes et Habitants*. J'ai un peu peur que ce duo ne signe la fin de Genticorum, mais ce nouvel album est une consolation amplement suffisante si tel est le cas. C'est un album exceptionnel! Il serait probablement prématuré de lui octroyer le titre d'album de l'année, mais il est certain qu'il en est digne. Les interactions entre les deux voix et les deux instruments (le violon et la guitare) occupent le devant de la scène tandis que les autres instruments (banjo, trompette) viennent compléter l'ensemble. Cela me rappelle *The Orange Tree*, de Grey Larsen et Andre Marchand, qui remonte à de nombreuses années, avec son mélange saisissant de modernité et de folk classique. À l'image de cet album, il est, je me répète, sublime!!

Par Richard Thornley  
Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard

### The Bills

Trail of Tales (Borealis)



Après un certain temps, il semble que tous les groupes trad passent par là... La transmutation. Steeleye Span s'est métamorphosé en The Wombles, Spirit of the West est devenu The Wonder Stuff, Great Big Sea a commencé à sonner comme les Counting Crows et voilà que The Bills revêt toutes les apparences des Barenaked Ladies. Bon d'accord, j'exagère peut-être un peu, mais je suis persuadé que les plus observateurs d'entre vous savent de quoi je parle. Cet album regorge d'éléments propres à The Bills : des harmonies vocales impeccables, un jeu de virtuose et une production léchée à l'excès. Toutefois, on ne peut s'empêcher de remarquer l'impression de musique pop qui s'en dégage.

Sur l'album, le groupe est formé de Marc

Atkinson (mandoline, guitare, percussions, chant); Adrian Dolan (violon, accordéon, piano, chant); Chris Frye (guitare, chant); Richard Moody (violon, alto, mandoline, chant); et Scott White (contrebasse, chant). Tous ont contribué aux thèmes habituels : jazz, classique, musique du monde. L'instrumentation acoustique fait en sorte que la musique conserve son aspect traditionnel, mais ce sont les chœurs enjoués de *Trail of Tales* qui ont attiré mon attention.

*Happy Be, Hittin' the Do* et *Jungle Doctor* sont les trois meilleurs exemples de la qualité pop de leur nouveau son. Alors, le verdict? Les anciens admirateurs du groupe ne l'aimeront peut-être pas autant que les vieux succès, mais il pourra plaire à de nouveaux admirateurs. Moi? Je dis allez les gars, allez-y jusqu'au bout. On branche les instruments et on se laisse aller!

Par Tim Readman  
Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard



The Bills

penguin eggs: spring 2016





## Maja et David

### Deux violonistes au goût sûr s'approprient des airs et des chansons traditionnelles danoises, suédoises et québécoises.

Par Tony Montague  
Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard

Nous avons tous lu des histoires de filles et de garçons qui jouent de la musique traditionnelle avant même d'avoir appris à marcher, nés dans des familles de chanteurs et de musiciens de génération en génération, et dont les aptitudes leur ont été transmises par osmose génétique et grâce aux séances musicales familiales...

Ce n'est pas tout à fait de cette manière que Maja Kjær Jacobsen au Danemark et David Boulanger au Québec ont appris la musique ancienne de leurs patries. En fait, dès le moment où ils en ont entendu, ils s'y sont plongés et n'en sont jamais ressortis.

« J'ai grandi avec un père qui jouait de la guitare et qui chantait des chansons folks de l'Angleterre, de l'Irlande, de l'Écosse et des États-Unis », explique Maja, contactée par Skype. « C'est le genre de musique que j'écoutais à la maison. J'assiste au festival Tønder, un événement énorme axé sur la musique de ces pays-là, depuis l'âge de 8 ans. J'ai commencé par jouer du violon, de la guitare et un peu de piano, puis je me suis inscrite à l'école dans un programme de musique folk.

« Je connaissais seulement le folk en anglais et je ne savais pas qu'il existait une culture folk propre au Danemark jusqu'à ce que j'aie dans un camp musical axé sur la musique folk. Beaucoup de gens au Danemark grandissent dans la tradition de la danse folklorique, mais cela n'a pas été mon cas. Découvrir cette communauté de jeunes gens fut pour moi une révélation. Je me suis mise à m'intéresser de plus en plus à la musique folk du Danemark, car cela me semblait avoir plus de sens. J'ai eu un professeur qui était un violoniste traditionnel, qui m'a fait découvrir la grande quantité de particularités que renfermait la tradition danoise. Je me concentre sur cette tradition depuis que j'ai 18 ou 19 ans. »

Survolons rapidement l'Océan atlantique

jusqu'à Montréal où David Boulanger est assis devant son ordinateur dans son bureau à la maison. « J'ai commencé à suivre des cours spéciaux en musique à partir de l'âge de 8 ans. La musique traditionnelle est entrée dans ma vie vers l'âge de 12 ans. Mon prof de musique connaissait beaucoup la musique traditionnelle, car il y avait beaucoup de violonistes et de chanteurs dans sa famille. Il nous a enseigné des danses québécoises et nous raconté des histoires. Ses cours m'ont vraiment intéressé et j'ai commencé à jouer dans un groupe à l'âge de 16 ans. La musique folk n'était pas présente dans ma famille, mais c'est comme s'il y avait quelque chose qui manquait, car dès que j'ai commencé à m'y intéresser sérieusement, je me suis vraiment senti à ma place. »

Dans le cadre d'un voyage scolaire, Maja et un groupe d'élèves de son école visitent Québec et David est invité à leur donner des cours de violon. Après avoir joué pendant quelques années au sein du groupe La Part du Quéteux, il devient le premier violoniste de La Bottine Souriante. Le lien est établi. Quelques années plus tard, David est invité à donner des cours dans un autre camp de musique folk et traditionnelle et Maja est là.

« Nous ne sommes plus ensemble, mais



notre idylle a commencé à ce moment-là », relate David. « Naturellement, nous voulions être ensemble le plus souvent possible, mais ce n'est pas évident lorsqu'on est éloigné de la sorte, avec tout ce que cela implique au niveau financier, que de passer de longues périodes dans un autre pays. Nous nous sommes dit, pourquoi ne pas préparer quelques morceaux que nous pourrions jouer ensemble, et essayer de programmer des spectacles? Tout doucement, nous avons commencé à jouer ensemble et à arranger des morceaux, qui ont assez rapidement constitué notre premier album *Nord* (2012). »

Maja et David ont constaté que la musique traditionnelle danoise et la musique traditionnelle québécoise ont beaucoup en commun. Elles ont toutes les deux été fortement influencées par les musiques anglo-celtiques, particulièrement celle de l'Écosse, qui ont été amenées au Danemark par des marins et des marchands, et au Québec par des soldats et des colons, et elles partagent la même structure de fond pour les percussions dans les airs de danse.

Depuis la sortie de *Nord*, Maja et David ont fait de nombreuses tournées, principalement au Danemark et en Suède, mais aussi au Québec, et ont profité de ce temps passé ensemble pour raffiner leurs arrangements. Ils ont appris à passer du style québécois au style danois ou suédois, et inversement, afin de conserver un équilibre entre les éléments et de les fusionner, entraînant des formes innovatrices et passionnantes. L'an dernier a vu la parution de l'album *CPH Café YUL*, qui présente un grand nombre d'airs originaux de la nouvelle tradition du Quénemark – à moins que ce ne soit Danebec? – et quatre vieilles chansons à qui on a offert un remodelage de bon goût. Si les arrangements ont été faits de concert, la composition fut exécutée en solo.

« C'est un album beaucoup plus personnel », commente David. « Nous avons obtenu une bourse de développement du Danemark pour la composition, alors l'album devait comporter un certain pourcentage de nouvelles compositions. Nous avons seulement utilisé des airs que nous avons écrits depuis que nous avons été réunis, alors on y reconnaîtra peut-être l'influence de nos voyages. Notre album nous ressemble et cela nous enchante. Fait intéressant, les morceaux que nous avons choisis chacun de notre côté fonctionnent ensemble tout à fait naturellement. »

David y chante deux chansons traditionnelles : « *Quel Triste Sort* », aux accents blues, qu'il a trouvée sur un enregistrement du chanteur et violoniste Joseph Larade de Chéticamp, Cap-Breton, et « *Dans Mon Chemin* », une chanson à répondre effrontément ambiguë dans le style québécois : « La vieille avec sa quenouillette/A voulu faire turlututu/A voulu faire turlurons turlurette/A voulu me frapper ». La chanson est exécutée d'une manière sobre, presque noble, et fait usage de nombreux turluron turlutettes soigneusement placés tels des feuilles de figuier orales à certains endroits du récit.

Maja a su créer un murmure fantastique et une atmosphère scandinave résonnante, où le violon Hardanger et un tapage de pied inoubliable sont à l'honneur. Sur toutes les autres pistes, les violons de Maja et de David s'entremêlent, entraînant tour à tour la mélodie ou le contrepoint, le rythme ou la basse, comme sur « *Møllerdatteren* » et « *Pær Fisker* », deux chansons traditionnelles chères à Maja, brillamment interprétées.

« J'ai trouvé ces chansons sur des enregistrements d'archives datant de 1907, réalisés par un homme ayant vécu dans mon village, un fabricant de sabots dénommé Chresten Sørensen-Thomaskjær. Il y avait seulement trois ou quatre vers pour chaque chanson sur l'enregistrement, alors j'ai dû fouiller dans les archives pour retrouver les versions manuscrites afin de refaire le casse-tête. Quand j'ai découvert qu'il y avait des chansons et une musique spécifiques à l'endroit où j'ai grandi, et que personne d'autre ne s'y intéressait au pays, ce fut une révélation pour moi. J'adore travailler là-dessus. »

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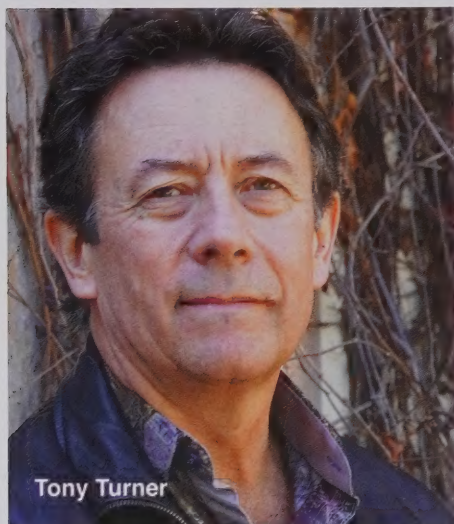
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**Tony Turner was suspended from his government job for writing a folksong criticizing then Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Here, Turner tells his story.**

Colin Irwin lamented the loss of “intelligent, well-argued, dissenting songs to stir the blood,” on this very page a couple of years ago. Well, Mr. Irwin, the times they are certainly a changin’.

The first signs appeared in 2014 with the outpouring of musical tributes honoring the late Pete Seeger – the godfather of songs of protest and hope – who dedicated his life to creating a better world through music. Then Neil Young recorded *Who’s Gonna Stand Up* – a damning of corporate greed and environmental neglect.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his intransigent, ideologically based regime provided a focus for a resurgence in protest songs throughout Canada. Well before last October’s general election, James Gordon’s biting satire *Stephen Harper: The Musical*, toured the country to great acclaim while *50 Stephen Harper Protest Songs*, was posted on YouTube. Most of these songs garnered a few hundred views – YouTube’s measure of reach and impact.

Responding to a local song-writing contest, I, too, wrote a song denouncing a political leadership that did not represent the Canada I knew and loved. The nine-verse laundry list of well-documented crimes against democracy included a jaunty sing-along chorus. *Harperman* was born.

Ottawa’s CKCU radio folk show host Chris White and videographer Andrew Hall saw the potential of the song as a rallying cry for

Canadians. With a small team they set up a *Harperman* website, videotaped a performance of the song complete with a smiling choir and organized a crowd-funding campaign to support cross-Canada *Harperman* singalong events. Posted on YouTube in late June, it attracted a respectable 1,500 views a day.

While the *Harperman* team was ramping up activities, I was too busy working at my three-day-a-week job at Environment Canada to get deeply involved. Nevertheless, once my employer discovered the video in late July, they suspended me alleging that writing, performing, posting, and promoting of *Harperman* somehow affected my ability to objectively and impartially do my job mapping a songbird habitat in Canada’s boreal forest. I was shocked that I was being denied the same freedom of speech that all Canadians enjoy under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In late August, news of my suspension was inadvertently leaked to the *Ottawa Citizen*. The news spread like wildfire and *Harperman* soared to more than two million views, thanks to the *Globe and Mail* and other newspapers who embedded the video in their web pages. Meanwhile in Twittersphere, #harperman became the second-most tweeted hashtag during the election after the notorious #pee-in-a-cup. Propelled by a workplace controversy, a politically charged song was now reaching millions of Canadians through both social and traditional media.

The situation was reminiscent of Pete Seeger’s anti-Vietnam war masterpiece *Waist Deep in the Big Muddy* that was pulled from airing on TV on *The Smothers Brothers Show* in 1967. That news led to a public outcry of censorship that garnered even more attention to the song and its message.

In my case, it was the YouTube performance that triggered the suspension and media attention. The public was outraged and the song quickly became the centrepiece of rallies across Canada. More than 50 *Harperman* sing-along events took place on Sept. 17 alone, including a 1,500-person gathering on Parliament Hill. Many were videotaped and posted to YouTube.

The overnight publicity was both exhilarating and stressful. While *Harperman* was taking on a life of its own, a songwriter’s dream for any song, I was at home quietly co-operating with an inquiry the department had no intention to conclude quickly, if at all. On the advice of my union, I didn’t speak to the media or sing in public. After eight weeks of being sidelined,

I retired early in order to devote myself to political activism for the cause of change that was far from certain with 17 days left in the election campaign.

I sang for green, orange, and red parties – wherever the song could make difference. Knowing that media was critical to reaching the masses, I invited and took all interviews. The last two days of the election included a flash mob at the Harper-Ford rally in Toronto where numerous folkie friends attending the Folk Music Ontario conference just down the road sang by my side. This was followed by a second Parliament Hill rally on Oct. 18.

Throughout the long campaign, more protest songs were created and shared with Canadians. Blue Rodeo’s angry *Stealin’ All My Dreams* was a brave effort that bore some backlash from some of their broad fan base. The Tim Baker song *Land You Love*, jointly performed by his band Hey Rosetta! and Yukon Blonde, was softer in tone but no less poignant. Ian Robb and Shelly Posen’s *There’s Always Money for a War*, complete with Monty Python-esque animation, was a brilliant YouTube treat.

But can any song of social conscious really make a difference? Bill Henderson, who co-wrote what may be the most anthem-like song of the election year – *Take Back This Land* – says that all songs, including songs of social conscience, live after the performance. They “turn round and round in people’s minds. They remind us of our deeper values; values that get lost in the buzz of our crazy, busy lives.”

Furthermore, songs unite people. They channel our anger, our shared values, and our dreams and create a foundation for action. They make us feel part of something big and important. Lyrics alone appeal to the intellect, but combined with a good melody and groove those ideas become emotionally charged and resonate with both the head and heart. That is a huge strength of all music and especially the protest song. Songwriters are in a unique position to influence change. Guthrie, Ochs, and Seeger knew this well.

If you think songs of social conscience will die out after Canada’s election, have a listen to *Decades After Paris*, the jazzy folk album by Danton Jay and Heather Lynn, that imagines a sustainable planet 30 years after the November 2015 Paris Climate Change conference. Perhaps they or some other songwriter has an enduring anthem equivalent to *We Shall Overcome* to be embraced by a world hungry for change. I hope so.



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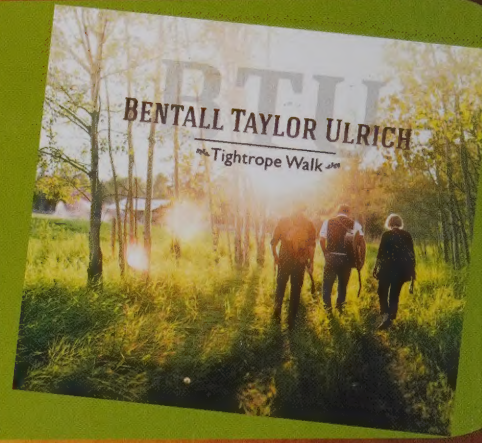
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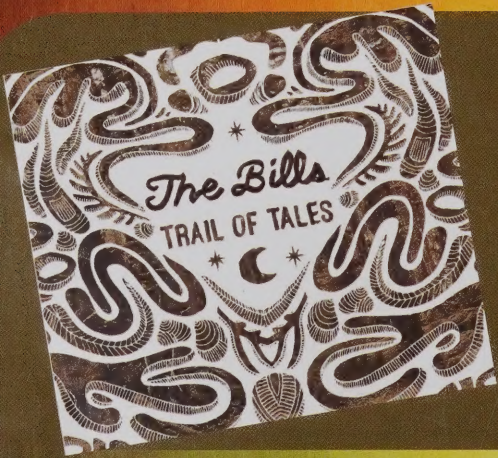
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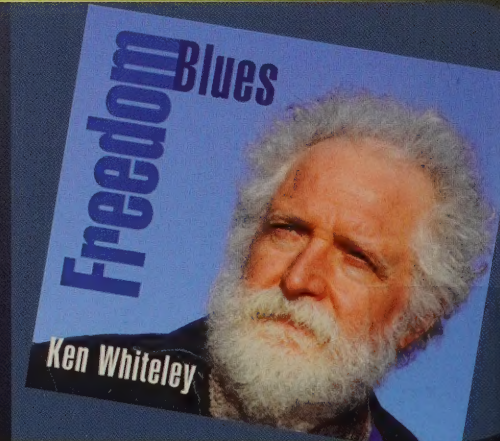
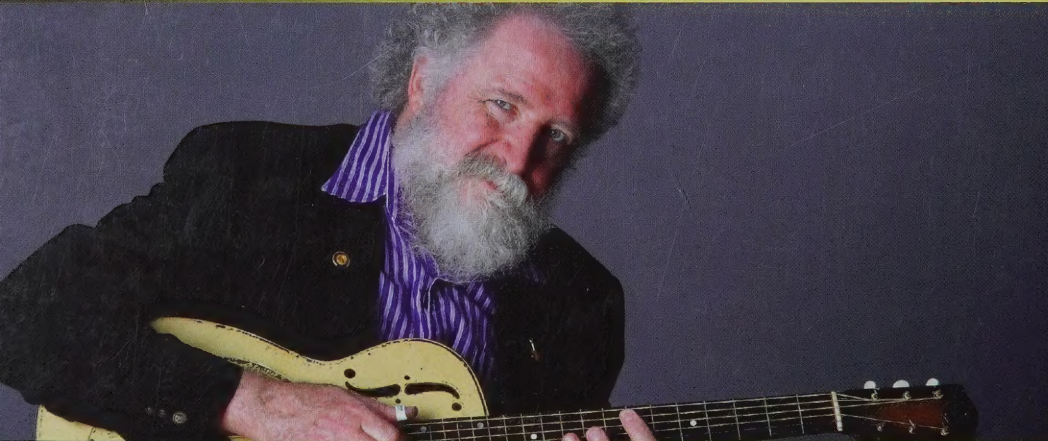
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